

In Memoriam

John Keyes

[June 20, 1818 – December 2, 1876]

**Winona County Bar Association
Winona, Minnesota**

December 20, 1876

John Keyes

(1818 – 1876)

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Winona Daily Republican

December 4, 1876

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THE LATE JOHN KEYES

The funeral of the late John Keyes took place from the family residence this afternoon. In his death Winona has lost one of its early settlers as well as one of its honored citizens, a man of great integrity of character, respected by all who knew him. About two weeks ago he was taken ill with catarrhal fever, which finally assumed the form of meningitis. He was unconscious nearly all of the time up to the hour of his death on Saturday morning.

Mr. Keyes was born at Ashford, Windham county, Connecticut, on the 20th of June, 1818, being a few months over 53 years at the time of his death. He removed to Michigan at an early day and for several years was engaged in mercantile pursuits, during which time he was married to Angeline Peaso. He subsequently spent three years in California, and thence to Winona in 1853, when this city was in its infancy. From that time his interests have been closely identified with Winona. For a few years he had an office alone as counselor at law, but afterwards became a partner in the law firm of Sargeant, Franklin & Keyes.

The death of Mr. Sargeant, followed a few years later by the demise of Mr. Franklin, left Mr. Keyes

again alone until 1871, when he formed a partnership with Mr. Snow, who survives him.

During his residence in this city Mr. Keyes has ever shown an active interest in educational affairs and was for several years clerk of the Board of Education. He was a member of the Board when he died. Two of his daughters, Miss Mary Keyes and Miss Carrie Keyes, are teachers in the public schools, as was also formerly Miss Anna Keyes, now the wife of Dr. Brooks of Minneiska. Besides these three daughters there are two more girls and three boys, the youngest five years old, making a family of eight children left with Mrs. Keyes to mourn the deep affliction occasioned by the removal of the head of the household.

It is unnecessary here to speak of the high estimation in which Mr. Keyes was held as an honorable member of the bar. His associates will give formal expression to the regard which they entertained for him. He was a member of the Masonic fraternity and the Order took part in the funeral services.

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ANNUAL MEETING OF THE WINONA COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION.

The Bar Association held their annual meeting on Monday evening for the purpose of electing officers and transacting other business. Messrs. Robert Taylor and James T. Bowdich were admitted as members.

The treasurer reported \$14.50 in the exchequer. This felicitous state of finances was received with evident gratification.

The election resulted as follows:

President—C. H. Berry.

Vice President—N. Buck.

Secretary—J. T. Bowditch.

Treasurer—E. A. Gerdtzen.

On motion of Robert Taylor, Esq., a Committee of three was appointed to examine the fee bill, to revise the same and make recommendations and to report at an adjourned meeting. The Chair appointed Messrs. Robert Taylor, O. B. Gould and R. R. Briggs as the Committee.

The chair announced the following standing committees:

Executive Committee—W. H. Yale and O. B. Gould.

On Admissions and Grievances—E. A. Gerdtzen, Thomas Simpson, William Gale, and Robert Taylor.

The appointments were duly approved by the meeting. Robert Taylor, Esq., offered the following resolution:

Resolved, That the members of this Association who may be appointed by the District Court for the examination of applicants to practice should rigidly enforce the requirements of the rules of the District Court relative thereto. The resolution was adopted.

The Bar passed the following obituary resolutions:

Whereas, Death has again invaded our circle and in the person of John Keyes, removed, one who was at once a valued member of this Association and a prominent member of the Bar, and

Whereas, We deem it eminently fit and proper to record our appreciation of his great worth, and pay tribute of respect to his memory.

Resolved, That in the death of John Keyes we recognize with grief and sadness the loss of one who in mental resources was highly gifted, in his private character was without reproach, and in his dealings with his fellow men, was upright, just and trustworthy—a man who in his lifetime did no act which could bring dishonor upon himself or his profession and against whose reputation can be hurled no shaft of detraction.

Resolved, That we sincerely sympathize with his bereaved family and tender them our heartfelt condolence.

Resolved, That these resolutions be published in the newspapers of Winona county, and that a manuscript copy of them be presented to the widow of the deceased; also that these resolutions be reported by the President of this Association to the District Court at its next session in this county.

The meeting then adjourned.

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March 27, 1877

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District Court

Hon. Wm. Mitchell, Judge, E. A. Gerdtzen, Clerk.
On Monday afternoon C. H. Berry, Esq., President of the Bar Association presented to the Court the memorial resolutions adopted on the death of the late John Keyes. Remarks were made by Mr. Berry, Mr. Yale, Judge Barber, Judge Lewis, Mr. Gale, and by his Honor, Judge Mitchell, all bearing testimony to the

personal worth of Mr. Keyes and the high esteem in which he was held by his brethren in the profession. The resolutions were ordered spread upon the records and the Court then adjourned.

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Appendix

From the *Winona Daily Republican*, October 25, 1876:

KEYES & SNOW, <i>Attorneys at Law, Notaries Public and Real Estate Agents,</i> OFFICE—Postoffice Block, Third street, Winona, Minn. JOHN KEYES, A. H. SNOW. 311011f
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From the *History of Winona County, Minnesota* 355-356, 409 (1883):

John Keyes came to Winona on September 12, 1853. He landed with his wife and two children at Hamilton's, on the lower end of the prairie. He bought an undivided one-eighth of H. S. Hamilton's claim, and lived in a part of his house during the winter and following summer. While living here he procured timber and lumber to build a house on the upper part of the claim next below where the Hubbards built their houses. The following season he became dissat-

isfied with his investment with Mr. Hamilton, and having an opportunity purchased the interest of Captain Smith in claim No. 1, the lower claim. The claim had been divided between Smith and Johnson, Johnson taking the west part, leaving the eastern portion for Captain Smith.

Mr. Keyes at once put up a shanty and took possession. He moved his family there about September 1, 1854, and the same fall built the house in which he lived nearly a score of years before he built the brick house (to which the old one is attached) where his family now resides. John Keyes died in November, 1877 (sic).

Mr. Keyes was a lawyer by profession, and held his office in his house when he commenced business here. In the fall of 1855 he was appointed clerk in the United States land office by L. D. Smith, the receiver, and continued in that position until the spring of 1857, after the land office was removed to Faribault. He then resumed the practice of law. His office was in a small building on the levee near the Winona House, owned and occupied by John A. Mathews as a real estate and loan office. In 1862 this office was burned. He was afterward one of the firm of Sargent, Franklin & Keyes, and at the time of his death one of the law firm of Keyes & Snow.

From an early day Mr. Keyes took a great interest in the public schools of the city of Winona. He was a director and clerk of the board from the time the first district school was opened until long after the present system was established. The city of Winona is more indebted to John Keyes for its present system of graded schools than to any other one person among the pioneer settlers or citizens of more modern days.

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John Keyes, justly entitled to the honor so generally accorded him as "father of the Winona public schools," died on the old Keyes homestead in the eastern part of the city, December 2, 1876, at which time he had been a resident of Winona a little over twenty three years.

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From William Mitchell, "Reminiscences of the Establishment of the Territorial Courts, Judges, Justices and Members of the Bar of Winona County" 20 (MLHP, 2013) (first delivered, 1889).

John Keyes came to Winona in 1853 and settled on the lower end of this prairie where his family still reside. He was engaged in the practice of law at first alone, and subsequently and successively as a member of the firms of Sargeant, Franklin & Keyes, Franklin & Keyes, and Keyes & Snow, until his death in December, 1876. Born in Windham county, Vermont, in 1818, removing to Michigan at an early age, where he lived until he came to Winona, with the exception of three years spent in California. Mr. Keyes was a man of great integrity of character, of positive views, but courteous to everyone, and respected by all who knew him. Not an advocate, although a man of ability and learning, he shunned the contests of the courtroom and preferred work in his office, where he was always found a safe counselor. *

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*** This is copied verbatim by Judge Arthur H. Snow in his "Bench and Bar of Winona," a chapter *The History of Winona County, Minnesota* (1913), posted separately on the MLHP.**

Posted MLHP: July 1, 2020.