

Benjamin Nutter Berry 1825-1923

"UNCLE BEN" BERRY DIES IN CHICAGO

Mattoon's Oldest Citizen Dies At Daughter's Home

Benjamin N. Berry, known affectionately all over the city as "Uncle Ben," and said to be Coles County's oldest citizen, passed away at 7:20 o'clock Friday evening at the home of his son-in-law and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Ed Scott, in Chicago.

"Uncle Ben" had been bedfast for about two weeks, or soon after celebration of the ninety-eighth anniversary of his birth at the Scott home on January 9. Mr. Berry was up and around, mingling with those assembled and it is presumed that the exertion was too great for his weakened physical powers, and he took to his bed. His death had been expected almost hourly for the last week.

The body, accompanied by the relatives, will arrive in this city at 10:30 o'clock tonight. It will be taken from the station to the home of his son Frank Berry, 1710 Wabash Avenue where it will lie until ten o'clock Sunday morning. At this hour it will be removed from the home to the Methodist Episcopal Church, where between the hours of ten and two it may be viewed by friends.

The funeral services are to be held at 2:30 o'clock Sunday afternoon from the church. Rev. R.F. McDaniel, former pastor but now living in Hastings, Neb., will conduct the services, assisted by Rev. C.F. Buker. Burial is to be made in Dodge Grove beside the body of the wife, who passed away on January 24, 1914.

Surviving "Uncle Ben" are six children: Mrs. E.S. Scott, Mrs. G.J. Stevens, Mrs. L.C. Burnett, and Mrs. Gertrude Pullen, all of Chicago; G.L. Berry of Indianapolis and Frank Berry of this city. There are also surviving nineteen grandchildren and twelve great-grandchildren.

Native of Ohio

Mr. Berry was born in Union County, Ohio [sic. Indiana] on January 9 1825, having come within two years of reaching the century mark in life's journey. In the same county, on January 15 1852 he and Mrs. Berry were married. Six weeks after they were married Mr. and Mrs. Berry moved to Indiana, where they remained for three years. [sic; they were born in Union Co Indiana, and lived in Ohio 3 years] From Indiana they came to Illinois in the year of 1855, settling in Pleasant Grove township on a farm near where the village of Lerna now stands. While a resident of Pleasant Grove Mr. Berry, in 1860 and again in 1864, was elected a justice of the peace, the first man to be chosen to this office in that township.

In April 1865, only a few days before the assassination of President Lincoln, Mr. and Mrs. Berry, with their five children, came to Mattoon, erecting a home at 1121 Wabash Avenue, in which they lived together until Mrs. Berry's death in 1914, and where "Uncle Ben" continued to make his home except at intervals, when he went to Chicago to live with his children. His home, however, was never actually "closed" as he always returned to it, and intended to return to this

city when mild weather came again. In this home five more children were born to Mr. and Mrs. Berry, four of whom have passed away.

"Uncle Ben" had often told how he and his family waded through prairie grass to get from the station to the place which later became their home.

Member of City Council

In 1866 Mr. Berry was elected as a member of the city council and was re-elected in 1868. He then retired from that body until 1876, when he again became a member. In 1897 he was elected township collector.

When first coming to Mattoon Mr. Berry went into Drish & Richmond's hardware store as clerk, where he remained for seven years, after which he engaged in the grocery business with Col. Kilner, and later with Col. Richmond. He then opened a coal and wood office, in which business he remained a number of years. After this Mr. Berry again engaged in the grocery business, this time alone in a store room built on his premises.

Mr. Berry was a member of the Methodist Episcopal church since 1846. He was for forty years class leader of the church.

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Berry Funeral is Unusually Large

The final respects of the hundreds of friends of B.N. ("Uncle Ben") Berry, Mattoon's oldest resident, who passed away Friday evening at the home of a daughter in Chicago, were paid to him Monday afternoon at the funeral services. The First Methodist Church, in which the services were held, overflowed with those in attendance, more than fifteen hundred people being present.

Rev. R.F. McDaniel of Hastings, Neb, a former pastor of the church, delivered the funeral sermon, and was assisted in the services by Rev. C.F. Buker, the pastor. The pallbearers were D.F. Silver, S.W. Phillips, Dr. A.A. Powell, G.S. Tarbox. John Cantlon Sr., and L.K. Graver.

Mrs. Frank Kern sang three songs; "Sweet Peace, The Gift of God's Love," "I Am Going Home," and "I Will Sing You A Song."

Following the services the body was taken to Dodge Grove, the funeral procession being one of the largest that has ever attended the funeral of a Mattoon Citizen. The G.A.R. post attended the services in a body in respect for the consideration and interest "Uncle Ben" has always shown in the affairs of the post, although never a member of it.

(1915)

Uncle Ben Berry Reaches Rife Age of Ninety Years

"Uncle Ben" Berry, one of Mattoon's oldest and best known citizens, celebrated his ninetieth birthday Saturday, when he was the guest of honor at an elaborate 6 o'clock dinner given at the home of his son, Frank Berry, 1710 Wabash Avenue. Six children, nineteen grandchildren and six great grandchildren congratulated Mr Berry on the anniversary of his birth.

Mr Berry was born in Union county, Indiana January 9 1825, and made his home at his birthplace for a number of years. He came to Mattoon about sixty-three years ago and since that time has become known to the majority of citizens. He conducted a grocery store in this city for more than ten years.

Four times Mr Berry was elected to the city council and he served the people of his ward and the city of Mattoon as one of the most able aldermen elected by them. Mrs H F Chappel, of this city, is a sister of Mr Berry and was present at the celebration yesterday. Mrs Chappel is Mr Berry's only living sister. She is past eighty-five years of age.

The Berry home was beautifully decorated in red and white. A huge birthday cake, lighted by ninety colored candles, occupied the center of the table.