

LOCAL MEN OF WORTH.

John Warner's Life of Activity and Usefulness.

One of the Original Contractors for the Construction of the Rock Island Road Through Here—A Pioneer—Part He Takes in Camp Life.

John Warner! In other words, "Uncle John!" The mere mention of the name carries with it respect and good feeling. There is probably no resident of Rock Island so widely known or so much esteemed as "Uncle John Warner." It is in no spirit of disrespect that he has been termed, "Uncle John," the title on the contrary being an honor that naturally came to him through the part he always takes and has taken for years in camp life. No



JOHN WARNER.

fishing or camping party can be expected to achieve any degree of success without the presiding presence of "Uncle John." He is the centre of the camp, the one man who is looked upon to keep things straight, overlook the cooking and point out the best places for fishing. He has

out the best places for fishing. He has fished in every stream of importance as he has been heard to say "from A to Utah." He is one of the best fishermen in this country—the prince of piscatorial pleasure, the king of camp cooks.

Who does not know John Warner? Yet there are few persons that realize the active and eventful life he has led, and the by no means small part he has taken in the formation of the avenues of commerce which are the very arteries of the community. Mr. Warner has not been a great railroad manager; his has been another, but a no less important work in the inter-state commerce of a great nation. It has been his duty to locate the lines of some of our greatest roads and to do and oversee the rough work such as few in his day were capable of doing. Born in the town of Greenbush in Reusselaer county, New York, August 9, 1814, he received the early advantages of a common school education and commenced the work of public improvements in 1838, doing the masonry on the Black river canal near Rome, N. Y. The next year he was engaged on the Western railroad doing the grading and masonry for that great line. Then he did similar work for the Boston & Albany road, the Boston & Schenectady road, and 1844 found him grading the Harlem and Connecticut river road, including the construction of the Willimasset and Oxbow bridges. Then he built the Pittsfield & Adams road, did a great deal of mechanical work, stone work and grading for the Worcester & Providence, the Rutland & Burlington, being engaged in the latter undertaking in 1848, '49, and then he was engaged in grading for the Hudson River road below Albany and afterward graded the Rochester & Niagara Falls line. This was in 1850 and the same year he did the grading and stone work for the Michigan Southern and then came his work in Illinois on the main line of the Rock Island road.

It was on Monday, March 2, 1852, that Mr. Warner arrived in Rock Island, the only person living here now who came with him then being W. H. Whitman; these gentlemen and others having driven across the state from Chicago. They stopped the night before in Moline.

They stopped the night before in Moline. There was great excitement here in those days. The people wanted the Rock Island road built, but they believed it never would be; that the chief contractors simply wanted to get the right of way for fleecing purposes, etc., and that the road would never come farther west than La Salle. Jarvis & Farnam were the engineers having the contract and the afternoon of the day that Mr. Warner and Mr. Whitman arrived, a great mass meeting was to have been held at the court house and at which Mr. Farnam was to speak, but the people were so indignant over what they believed to be the purposes of the engineers, that they would not permit Mr. Farnam to speak until he had printed hand bills bearing a statement from John Warner that the latter had been given a sub contract to do the grading and stone work of the road west and across the Mississippi. When these hand bills were put in circulation, they caused great rejoicing, and a grand public reception was accorded Mr. Warner.

The road was built, but Mr. Warner had to commence the operations of grading several months before he expected to in order to show the people that the company meant business. But he was equal to the emergency and the part subtle to him proved one of the best graded parts of the entire system. In fact he did most of the mechanical work of the entire road, east of the Mississippi, though his principal work was from Green river to this point. He also took the contract for the grading across the Island and the stone work, and it became Mr. Warner's duty to lay the first stone ever placed in the Mississippi for bridge rests.

On Jan. 2, 1854, Mr. Warner met with an extremely unfortunate accident above Moline, his horse running away and he was thrown out and one of his limbs was so badly fractured that he has never since entirely regained the use of it. At that time he was overseeing work on the Osage bridge in Missouri and at other points on the St. Louis & Pacific road, where he had taken heavy contracts for

the stone and superstructure work. Later he and Mr. Whitman were engaged in construction work on the Union Pacific road in Utah.

One of Mr. Warner's greatest achievements in early days hereabouts was the construction of Rock river bridge and there are many other triumphs in construction in the country which he is responsible for, but which through the modesty of his nature will never be known. Messrs. Louis Saulpaugh and Jacob Warner and E. P. Reynolds, since famous as contractors, did many of their early undertakings under Mr. John Warner's supervision.

Mr. Warner also had quite an experience at steamboating years ago. In company with Capt. C. P. Warner—who, however, was no relation—he constructed at New Albany in 1857, the "John Warner," first used as a freight boat and afterward as a packet. It was this boat in 1862—and "Uncle John" was on her then—that transferred the Thirteenth Illinois regiment including Maj. J. M. Beardsley, the late Lieut. E. I. Beardsley and many other Rock Islanders from Helena, Ark. to Vicksburg and thence to Arkansas post.

Mr. Warner was for fifteen years and until three years ago, president and general manager of the Rock Island & Moline horse railroad, and the road was never in better condition financially, or as far as the public is concerned than when he was in control.

Amid all the cares of his active life he has always found time to spend with "the boys" in camp, and the annual sojourns on the island or at New Boston would be lacking, in all that makes them enjoyable, but for his presence. He commenced camping out many years ago and some of his expeditions extended as far north as St. Paul and the headwaters of the Mississippi.

Mr. Warner's family consists of his wife and daughter in this city and son John in St. Paul.

BUSY LIFE ENDED.

**John Warner Passes to His
Long Home.**

HIS DEATH AT 7:30 THIS MORNING.

**The Part He Took in the Early History of
the Community—Built the First Railroad
that Penetrated Rock Island—His Work
of Construction Elsewhere—Achievements
and Success—Biographical.**

John Warner breathed his last at his home, 2730 Moline avenue, at 7:30 this morning. The end came as gently and peacefully as the last few years of the former busy life had been passed. The news of the passing away of the well-known citizen, while not unexpected, was received



JOHN WARNER.

with no less sorrow and regret in all parts of the city. Mr. Warner had been indisposed for a number of

operations several months in advance of the time anticipated, in order to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the people that the company he represented really meant business. He was equal to the emergency, and the portion of the great system constructed under his supervision has proved one of the best graded strips of the road. In fact he did most of the mechanical work of the entire road between Chicago and the Mississippi river, though his principal work was between this point and Green river. He also took the contract for grading across the island of Rock Island, as well as the stone work, and it became his duty to lay the first stone ever placed in the Mississippi for bridge rests. He had the subcontract for the construction of the old railroad bridge, the first that spanned the Mississippi.

On Jan. 2, 1854, Mr. Warner met with an extremely unfortunate accident east of Moline, where he was driving when his horse ran away, and he was thrown from his buggy, sustaining so severe a fracture of one of his limbs that he had not regained the use of it since. During that year he was engaged in overseeing the construction of the Osage bridge in Missouri and at other points on the St. Louis & Pacific road, where he had extensive contracts for stone and superstructure work. Later he and Mr. Whitman discharged an extensive contract on the Union Pacific road in Utah.

Constructed Rock River Bridges. ●

One of Mr. Warner's proudest achievements of early days was the construction of the first Rock river bridge. He was a master of constructive undertakings, and many Rock Island contractors, who afterward became known throughout the country, gained their early knowledge under John Warner's supervision.

years, and seriously so during the past few days, the system which had once been so rugged, yielding at last to the weight and infirmities of years, and dissolution being finally due to congestion of the brain.

There are none of our early settlers who were more prominently and firmly identified with the original growth of the city than was John Warner, but it remained for those who knew of his achievements and his successful undertakings to tell of them. He was of too modest and retiring a disposition to relate them himself. Yet he was not averse to anecdotes, and he could tell as much in the way of interesting reminiscence of Rock Island's history as any one living hereabouts.

Sketch of His Life.

Mr. Warner was born in the town of Greenbush, Reusselaer county, N. Y., Aug. 9, 1814. He received the early advantages of a common school education, and commenced the work of public improvements in 1838, doing the masonry on the Black river canal near Rome, N. Y. The year following the date last mentioned, he was engaged on the Western railroad doing grading and masonry for that line. Then he did similar work for the Boston & Albany and Boston & Schenectady roads, and 1844 found him grading the Harlem & Connecticut River railroad, including the construction of the Willimasset and Oxbo bridges. Then he built the Pittsfield & Adams road, did a great deal of mechanical work, stone work and grading for the Worcester & Providence, and the Rutland & Burlington, being engaged in the latter undertaking in 1848-49, and then he was engaged in grading for the Hudson River road below Albany, and afterward preparing the same preliminaries for the Rochester & Niagara Falls line. This took him up to 1850, and that year he did the grading and stone work for the Michigan Southern. This brought him westward, and his next contract was in Illinois on the main line of the great Rock Island road.

Many years ago Mr. Warner had quite an experience in steamboating. In company with Capt. C. P. Warner—who, however, was no relation—he constructed along in 1857 the "John Warner," first used as a freight boat, and afterward as a packet. It was this boat in 1862—and "Uncle John" was then on her—that transferred the Thirtieth Illinois regiment, including many well known Rock Island volunteers in the Union army, from Helena, Ark., to Vicksburg, and thence to an Arkansas post.

In Street Railways.

Mr. Warner was one of the main promoters of early street railway communication in the three cities. For 15 years he was president of the Moline & Rock Island Horse railway company, the pioneer line of Rock Island and Moline, and the road was in those days run as no other street railway in the three cities was. He retired voluntarily a few years before the Chicago syndicate purchased and consolidated the street railways of the tri-cities.

Mr. Warner was of a social disposition. He liked a good time as well as anyone, and he delighted in pleasant companionship. He was particularly fond of an outing, and for years, even during the busiest times of his life, he was the central figure of camping-out parties in the locality. Indeed, until the ills of advancing years have compelled his retirement to his Moline avenue home, no camping party was complete without "Uncle John," as he was affectionately and familiarly known.

There was no man better known or more widely respected in the community than John Warner. He was upright and straightforward in all his dealings. He always took pride in the city's welfare and its institutions, and was one of Rock Island's best citizens in the best sense of the term.

Mr. Warner and Miss Caroline L. Morris were united in marriage at Greenbush, N. Y., Jan. 19, 1843, and the widow and two children survive.

Came to Rock Island.

Monday, March 2, 1851, witnessed Mr. Warner's arrival in Rock Island. He was accompanied by the late W. H. Whitman, then like himself, an extensive railroad contractor, and the two, with others, having driven across the prairie state from Chicago. They stopped the night before reaching here in Moline. In those days great excitement prevailed here over the construction of the road, and public interest ran high. The people wanted the road, and wanted it badly, but they lacked confidence in the ultimate success of the project. They were rather inclined to the belief that the chief contractors sought mainly to obtain the right of way for purely speculative purposes, and that once securing it some would become fleeced, and the road choked off at LaSalle.

Jarvis & Farnam were the engineers having the contract, and the afternoon of the day Messrs. Warner and Whitman put foot in Rock Island a great mass meeting was to have been held at the court house, at which Mr. Farnam was to speak, but the people had become so convinced as to what was the purpose of the engineers that they would not permit Mr. Farnam to speak until he had printed and distributed handbills bearing a statement from John Warner that the latter had been given a sub-contract to do the grading and stone work west, to and across the Mississippi river at this point. The circulation of these handbills turned a prevailing sentiment of doubt into a spirit of general rejoicing, and an elaborate public reception was tendered Mr. Warner.

Built the Road.

Mr. Warner built the road, but he was obliged to commence grading

the latter being John R. Warner, of St. Paul, and Miss Carrie H. Warner, of this city.

The Funeral.

The funeral will occur at 2 o'clock Sunday afternoon from the Warner home, on Moline avenue.

Mrs. George Graves.

Mrs. George Graves died at her home on Fourth street, between Eighth and Ninth avenues, at 7:30 this morning of inflammation of the stomach, superinduced by the grippe. She was in her 31st year, and had lived in Rock Island 25 years. She leaves with her stricken husband one child. The funeral occurs from the late home Sunday at 2 p. m.

Von Koeckritz.

Mrs. Albertina Von Koeckritz died at 2:40 this afternoon at her home, 2308 Fourth avenue, aged 55 years, of heart and lung trouble. She leaves three sons, W. C., of Davenport, Horst and Agorn, of Rock Island.

Morrison's "Faust."

Morrison's company will be the attraction at the Burtis next Saturday and Sunday in Bayle Bernard's version of Goethe's immortal "Faust," which, with the excellent cast, new and elegant scenery, wonderful electric effects and calcium lights, will be given upon a scale of grandeur never before witnessed here. One of the features of the production will be the Nuremburg cathedral choir rendering appropriate music throughout the piece. The "Brocken" scene in the fourth act is a marvel in stage craft with its flashes of genuine lightning and showers of real fire.