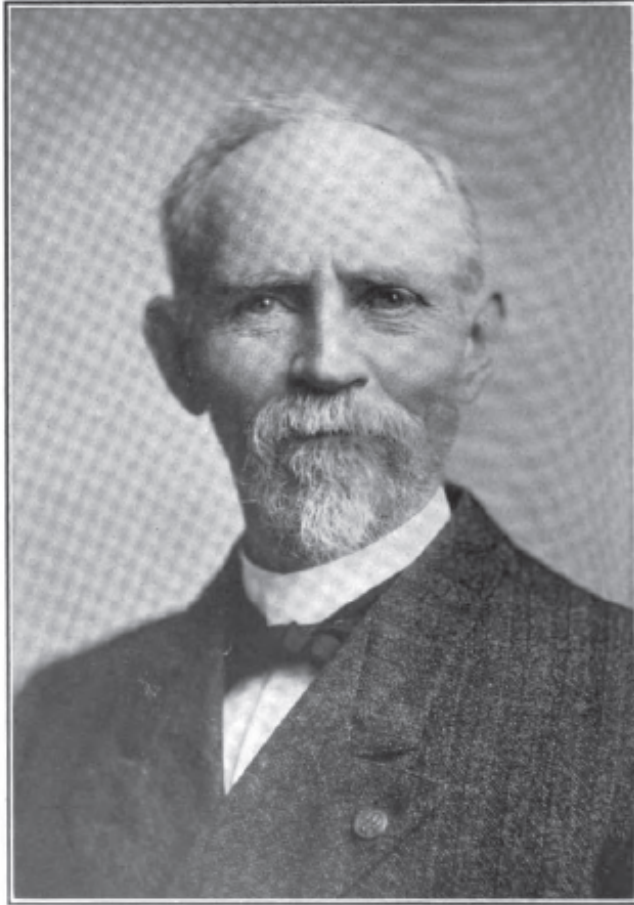


John M. Williams 1906



JOHN M. WILLIAMS, DEPARTMENT COMMANDER.

Edited from the
1925 Department
Encampment Book:

John M. Williams –
A noble life has been
lived --- a noble life on
earth has ended. John M.
Williams at his death was
one of the chief members
of the Grand Army of the
Republic. He shared his
life with the State and
Department of Missouri.
His ambition was to make
the best of his life. He
was quiet and ambitious.
His open life, his high
moral character gave
freedom from all fear. In
his professional life, and
also in his political life,
he stood before the people
challenging their

judgment.

He was born in Guernsey County, Ohio, [on Oct 6, 1843 to George Williams and his wife]. He enjoyed the benefits of the common and High schools. He had a splendid military record. He entered the Army at eighteen and served three years in the 122nd Ohio Infantry. During the service he was promoted from Orderly Sergeant to the rank of Captain. He participated in twenty-two battles, and at the close of the war he located in California, in Moniteau County, Mo., and began the practice of law. He never knew any special reason why he located at this particular point. When he wanted to settle down for his life work he started West and happened to stay over night at California. He decided that there was room for one more lawyer, and in two days he decided to locate. The physical and civil

conditions of Moniteau County were at a low ebb at that time. The ravages of war were evident on all sides. Farms laid waste, houses destroyed, former improvements had well nigh disappeared. California was little more than a straggling village; small population, little business, little employment to hold the immigration that was pushing Westward. No schools, no church buildings, small litigation in the courts, the immediate prospects were not very encouraging. With a few hundred dollars in his pocket he finally settled on twenty acres in the suburbs of the village and determined to grow up with the town.

While he for a time found little to do in the law office, there was ample demand in the country and town to engage every talent he possessed. There was a deep felt want for the establishment of common schools, and no professional man felt it to be his duty to set the school system in motion. Mr. Williams was finally prevailed upon by some friends to undertake the work without any thought of remuneration. He secured action of the court for school divisions and districts, and authority to levy funds to maintain the schools. Other professional men were busy making a living and no assistance was rendered by them. Mr. Williams rather found it a pleasure, however, to find employment which brought him in touch with the people, and he took the work to his law office and as he found time he pushed the work. Temporary housing was found and two small schools were opened with one teacher in each. Four months school was promised for the first year. A School Board was elected and Mr. Williams was chosen Chairman of the Board of Education. The people were asked to vote bonds for two school houses, and the southern element were so uninformed about a public school system that they, or a part of them, counseled against the bonds. They feared bonds might break them up. The bonds carried after a lively campaign. Some favored the bonds simply because Mr. Williams said it was the thing to do. The school houses were built and schools established. This school work and the campaign put Mr. Williams on the map and he fast came to the front as one of the chief citizens of the town. But there were no church buildings and little moral restraint thrown around the children of the town, and the necessity of building a church was very manifest. Through much effort and voluntary work a Presbyterian Church was build and a Sunday School started.

Several military and civil honors were conferred upon John M. Williams. He served as Chairman of the Board of Education of California for 28 years, and this service was by no means a sinecures, for he was conscientiously making provisions for the education of the youth in their midst. He represented his County in the State Legislature. IN 1894 he was

elected to the State Senate, being the only Republican ever elected from the Fourteenth Senatorial District. He was appointed by Governor Hadley to fill out an unexpired judgeship, and upon retiring received a unanimous vote of the Bar for his clear and unbiased judgment on all questions involved. He served on the Republican State Committee for ten years. [He was a member of Post 276 in Clarksburg, MO.] He served the Department of Missouri one year as Commander. He served one year as National Patriotic Instructor, and for several years served on the National Council of Administration. He has filled these several stations with honor to himself as well as to the public.

During his early settlement in California, following the unsettled conditions, there was no public place of safety for important papers and the small savings of the people. There were no banks or safety vaults. Comrade Williams becoming known through the schools, and being a deacon and Sunday School Superintendent, one by one the war widows came to him for consultation about their small life savings. They asked him to take them and keep them safely; not asking interest but wishing to make the principal safe. He at first refused to take the responsibility, but finally consented to take their savings. This information gradually circulated among the people and he could not turn them away. There was small opportunity to invest these savings so as to secure both safety and interest. The titles of land were unsettled and few people wanted to borrow money who were able to give more than their personal notes as security. In taking over these small savings the agreement was that interest at the rate of six per cent would be paid on all funds invested. During these few years quite a clientage had accumulated and he was compelled to open a ledger account with each person. A few thousand dollars were brought in and his office served as an improvised bank. Mr. Williams designated these small accounts “thank-you-mam-jobs,” because they were unremunerative, though they required considerable time. After a few years a bank was established in the town and Mr. Williams required the people to move their funds to the bank for safe-keeping. Some prophesied that this “thank-you-mam business” would detract from law business, yet he found that the very opposite proved true, for the children of the parents, whose funds Mr. Williams had safeguarded, later brought their law business to his law office, so that the bread cast upon the waters returned after many days hence. These side lights to his life work enable me to say that John M. Williams was a great and good man.

... [Two paragraphs about what makes a great man]...

If, therefore, we apply these measurements to John M. Williams we can measure the depth of his life by his understanding the conditions under

which he lived when he settled in California. The conditions were hard and discouraging, but he adjusted himself to them. His understanding led him to see the necessity of schools and he at once grappled with the problem. The education of the youth was demanded by the public good. Without remuneration and somewhat at the cost of his professional business, he met the demand. His contribution to the protection of the small patrimony of the old people ; his consent to take on this brotherly and unremunerative work and thus contribute to the general welfare of the community brings out the real breadth of his character. Again the hearty effort he made in joining with the public in building churches and schools that moral restraint might be thrown around the youth to guard them from the pitfalls of life, mark the heights of his spiritual aspirations. The life, therefore, of John M. Williams is not measured by the achievements in his legal profession, although he made a good average success ; but his full life is marked by the broad comprehensive citizenship in the community life. He built a segment into the life of every member of the community.

[He died of cerebral hemorrhage on Nov 20, 1924 and was buried in the Masonic cemetery.]

At his funeral the schools and churches of the City paid tribute to his great and good man.

He had reached his eighty-first year – death had no terrors for him. The end came suddenly, but all was well.

Comrades, let us strengthen our lives by cherishing the memory of John M. Williams. One year, or possibly two, will tell the tale of most of our lives.

--- Poem edited out at this point –

Respectfully submitted as a tribute to the memory of our beloved John M. Williams.

Springfield, Mo., May 6, 1925,

W.C. CALLAND.

After eulogistic remarks by Past Commander-in-Chief Rassieur and by Past Department Commander S.D. Webster the Memorial was unanimously adopted and it was ordered that it be spread at large in the Journal of the proceedings of the encampment. The comrades stood at attention and Comrade Webster sounded Taps.