

# The Tabor Beacon

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## Sleep, Comrade Drake, In Your 'Little Green Tent'

### Tabor Says Last Goodbye to Its GAR Veteran

Phineas H. Drake, last Civil War veteran of Tabor and Fremont County died Monday, April 3. He also was Tabor's oldest citizen, having observed his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday Aug. 31, 1943. On the occasion of that event the entire community shared in a public reception held in the Congregational church.

Mr. Drake was an unusually active man for one of his age. Up until very recently he made several trips downtown each day. He was one of the organizers of the G. A. R. in Tabor and was one of its charter members. When he reached his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday he decided to celebrate it by going to Chicago and attending the Century of Progress Exposition then on in that city.

This Civil War veteran was born in Fengal, Canada West, Aug. 31, 1843. He was born a subject of Queen Victoria, one of the noblest queens that ever ruled the British Empire. When he was born John Tyler, the 10<sup>th</sup> president of the United States, was in the chair. When he was born there were but 26 states in the Union, there were but 26 stars in the American flag. He was three years old before Iowa became a state. During his century the United States engaged in five major wars. He was two when the Mexican War began in 1846. He was 17 when the Civil War began and enlisted when he was 21. Then

followed the Spanish-American and Philippine Wars in 1898, World War in 1917 and World War No. 2 in 1941.

When he was a mere lad the family moved to the States and settled at Chillicothe, Ill. He enlisted Sept. 20, 1864, in Co. "M" Illinois Cavalry. He was mustered in Oct. 8. The regiment to which he belonged had been organized by Col. Robert G. Ingersoll, noted lawyer and orator of that day. Though Col. Ingersoll had resigned before Mr. Drake joined the regiment our citizen personally knew him and often visited in his home. Mr. Drake enlisted at the Fair Grounds in Peoria, Ill. His company was taken down the river to St. Louis, and then taken to Memphis, Tenn. He was mustered out at Memphis, Sept. 30, 1865.

His company was in a lot of skirmishes. They tore up railroads, burned bridges, and burned cotton gins. They went in advance of the infantry and created havoc whenever they could so as to embarrass the southern armies. On one occasion his company "M" was detailed with company "B" of the same regiment to destroy a bridge. It was not until in 1939, 75 years later that he learned that Matthias W. Baker of Shenandoah was in the other company. He went over and met this comrade and

they had a great visit relating their war incidents.

During the war Mr. Drake saw President Lincoln at the time he visited their regiment. He also had seen Abraham Lincoln before he became president. The horse, which Mr. Drake rode all through the service, was returned to the government.

By profession Mr. Drake was a harness maker. He learned to become an expert in his work by completing an apprenticeship. He was able to make every part of harness except the metal work. When he first came to Tabor, Jan. 9, 1880, he worked in the harness shop of Charley Will. In later years he was employed as a harness maker in Omaha. While there he had the experience of lining a bag with sheepskin only to find out afterwards that it was used to hold the ransom money of \$25,000 paid by the Cudahy family to redeem their kidnapped son. The boy was kidnapped by Pat Crowe. Mr. Drake was well acquainted with the lad for he often frequented the harness shop.

Mr. Drake was the son of Thomas and Martha Drake. He had one brother, Wesley Drake, much younger than himself. July 12, 1882, he and Miss Parthenia Scofield were married at her home in Hillsdale, with the Rev. Templeton of the Methodist church in Glenwood officiating. His bride was a native of England. She had come to America with her folks when she was two. Her people returned to England and on her ninth birthday she found herself on the ocean again en route to America. One son, William T. Drake, was born to them. He and his mother mourn the death of the aged father. For 24 years Mr. And Mrs. Drake lived in Omaha and for 14 years they made their home in California. For 61 years this

aged couple have shared life's experiences.

Funeral services were held Wednesday, April 5, at 2:30 in the Reeves Funeral Home conducted by the Rev. Peter Jacobs of the Congregational church. The male quartet, Ben Hall, Warren Darrah, Paul Rosentrater, W. A. Reeves sang two numbers, "Jesus Savior Pilot Me" and "Crossing the Bar." Blanch Dalton accompanied them as pianist. Although the family had requested that there be no flowers there were several bouquets. A number of members of the American Legion Post of Sidney attended in uniforms and made up the firing squad under the direction of Al Christopher. The color bearers were Clarence Inman and Ivan Reeves. The color guard was W. T. Iams.

Warren Darrah and Merlin Perkins sounded taps. John M. Gudgel, past commander of the G. A. R. of Iowa, whose home is in Shenandoah, came over to attend the service of Mr. Drake. Mr. Gudgel also was present at the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Mr. Drake. A number of members of the W. R. C. of Shenandoah came with their president, Mrs. Mabel Darnold, the daughter of Mr. Gudgel. Those who bore the casket were Donald Douglass, George Gilbert, Robert Archie, Dayre Williams, Roy Rodman, and Bryan Kesterson. Interment was in the Tabor cemetery.

His death marks the passing of the bronze button. No one else will be privileged to wear the uniform of blue so characteristic of the Civil War. He was the last of the local organization of that grand old organization, the Grand Army of the Republic, so influential in its day. No longer will our annual memorial services be honored by the presence of one of the veterans of the war that occasioned that national observance.