

Iowa's Last Civil War Vet, James Martin, Dies at 101

(The Register's Iowa News Service.)

SUTHERLAND, IA. — James Patterson Martin, 101, Iowa's last Civil war veteran, died here Tuesday of the infirmities of his age and a heart ailment.

The aged veteran died in the little frame home on Sutherland's main street, where he had lived with his widowed daughter, Mrs. Elsie Hill.

In the last year, Mr. Martin's health had declined steadily and his condition had been considered critical for the last few months.

Since his one hundred-first birthday party last November, Mr. Martin had been confined to his bed most of the time.

Although Mr. Martin once vividly remembered carrying the news of Lincoln's assassination to Fort Lyon, Va., the fighting at Gettysburg and other Civil war experiences, his memory failed near the end of his life.

Early Years.

Only occasionally, his daughter said, did the veteran recall his early years. Often he failed to recognize old Sutherland acquaintances when they visited him.

Mr. Martin, one of the last 60 G.A.R. members in the United States, enlisted in the Union army when he was 16. He was living in Mineral Point, Wis., at the time he served in the First Wisconsin Heavy artillery.

The veteran was born Nov. 10, 1847, in Scotland and came to the United States when five years old. His family settled in Wisconsin.

Mr. Martin who would have been 102 next November, was named state commander of the G.A.R. in 1947 to succeed John M. Gudgel, who died in Shenandoah Mar. 22 of that year at the age of 99.

Since the death last June 29 of Ebenezer G. McMurray, 103, of Iowa City, Mr. Martin had been the only Civil war veteran in the state.

Iowa honored its last Civil war veteran on his birthday last November. Fifteen military units paraded past his home and representatives of various veterans organizations spoke.

It was the last public appearance by the aged "boy in blue."

But until 1946, Mr. Martin marched in every Memorial Day parade. When he was 94, he still drove a car and didn't quit working in his garden until he was 97.

Throughout his life, Mr. Martin was extremely active. He participated in the Masonic lodge for more than 50 years.

Insurance Pioneer.

He was an insurance pioneer and helped organize the O'Brien County Mutual Insurance association. He also helped develop Waterman Township's rural telephone system.

Named after him is O'Brien County's "James P. Martin Women's Relief Corps" at Sanborn, an organization allied with the G.A.R.

For many years Mr. Martin attended the annual state encampment of the G.A.R. But the seventy-fifth meeting was held at Cedar Rapids June 5 without him.

Attending were representatives from G.A.R. allied organizations including the Women's Relief Corps, Ladies of the G.A.R., Daughters of Union Veterans and Sons of Union Veterans.

His health again prevented his attending the G. A. R.'s last national encampment in Indianapolis, Ind. last month.

Five Brothers.

Mr. Martin was one of five brothers who enlisted and served in the Union army. None was killed in the war, but the other four are dead.

After the war Mr. Martin returned to farming in Wisconsin. A few years later he went to Kansas, filed a land claim and farmed a homestead.

While he was in Kansas Mr. Martin married Mary Elizabeth Brady, of LeRoy, Kan., who died in 1916. He and his wife returned to Wisconsin a few years after their marriage by covered wagon.

In 1886 Mr. Martin, his wife and seven children moved to Iowa and settled 5 miles east of Sutherland. Since 1936 Mr. Martin had lived with Mrs. Hill. For many years they lived on an 8-acre farm east of Sutherland.

But the work of caring for the farm and her father became too strenuous for Mrs. Hill and they moved into Sutherland in April 1948.

Six Children.

Six of Mr. Martin's children survive. Besides Mrs. Hill, they are

Mrs. Mary A. Thiesen, of Sutherland; Clyde, of Calumet; William R., of Kalispell, Mont.; James B., of Hoquiam, Wash. and Mrs. R. E. Lampman, of Merced Falls, Calif.

Also surviving are 28 grandchildren, 51 great-grandchildren and two great great grandchildren.

Mrs. Hill and the doctor were at the veteran's bedside when he died.

One of the rules Mr. Martin lived by was punctuality. His often-repeated motto was: "Its just as easy to be ahead as behind."

He liked to converse about the Civil war, the early days around Sutherland, and the Masonic lodge.

But he never discussed two subjects – politics and religion – because he "never liked to quarrel with people."

One of Mr. Martin's greatest pleasures was smoking cigars – which he virtually did every day until his critical illness. He always drank one bottle of beer every day and drank a tablespoon of whiskey in a glass of water every morning.

One of the things of which he was proudest was casting a vote for Abraham Lincoln.

Masonic services and full military honors will be part of Mr. Martin's funeral.

Miss Amy Noll, Des Moines, secretary of the state G.A.R., informed friends here that Gov. William S. Beardsley and Brig. Gen. Charles H. Grahl, Iowa adjutant general, were trying to arrange to attend the funeral.

The body was taken to the Baumgarten Funeral home here while arrangements for the funeral are being made. They await word from relatives on the west coast. The funeral is not expected to be held before Friday.

Guard of Honor.

The American Legion here will furnish the guard of honor, color guard and firing squad for the funeral, and its members will conduct the military rites. The Rev. Alvin Nicholson of the Church of Christ here will have charge of the services.

Mr. Martin was the fifth Iowa or former Iowa Civil War veteran to die in the past year. Mr. McMurray, the next-to-the-last veteran living in Iowa, died June 20, 1948.

The last veteran who enlisted in Iowa died Dec. 24, 1948, in Beatrice, Nebr. He was Michael Bon Doll, who formerly lived at Atlantic. He was buried at Wiota.

Other Veterans.

Robert T. Bryan, formerly of Macedonia, Sidney and Harlan died last Jan. 17 in Boulder, Colo. and was buried in Thurman.

A former Ottumwa resident, Julian M. Ransier, died last November at Hot Springs, Ark., at the age of 104.

They were the last of 76,242.