

ANNALS OF IOWA.

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Notable Deaths

THOMAS WILSON was born in New Brighton, Beaver county, Pa., July 18, 1832; he died in Washington, D. C., May 4, 1902. He received only a common school education when he started out to make his own way in the world, at first as an apprentice in Salem, O., to learn carriage making. Two years later he returned to New Brighton, remaining with his parents and working at his trade until he attained his majority. Coming west he served as a journeyman carriage maker in St. Louis, Mo., Troy, Ill., and elsewhere, finally settling in Marietta, Marshall county, where he followed his trade for some years, his principal work being the making of heavy plows used for breaking new prairie land. He was chosen deputy clerk of the district court and served in this capacity for some years, during which time he turned his attention to law, reading Blackstone and Kent after the day's work. He completed his law studies in the office of Finch & Crocker in Des Moines, after which he was admitted to the bar. He practiced for some time in Marietta with considerable success. He took an active part in the famous contest between Marietta and Marshalltown, which was one of the most vigorously prosecuted county-seat fights that ever occurred in Iowa, the contending parties at one time coming very near bloodshed. Marshalltown finally won the victory, which completely wiped out the pretensions and ambitions of Marietta. At the beginning of the civil war he assisted in raising Co. A, 2d Iowa Cavalry, of which Hon. W. P. Hepburn was the captain. Hepburn was soon promoted to lieutenant-colonel when Wilson became captain of the company. He served with his regiment until September, 1864, when, having been mustered out with the brevet rank of colonel, he went to Washington for the purpose of adjusting his accounts with the government in connection with the service. From this time forward Washington continued to be his home. For a long time he had a large practice before the court of claims and the United States supreme court. He retired from his profession in 1881, when he was appointed consul to Ghent, Belgium. After a few years he was transferred to Nantes, and afterwards to Nice. He had for many years before going to Europe taken great interest in the study of archæology, having explored many prehistoric mounds in the vicinity of his birthplace. He continued his studies and investigations in this direction during the time he was in Europe. Upon his return to this country he was appointed curator of archæology in the Smithsonian Institution. Since he gave his attention to the study of archæology he has written several books which have been published under the auspices of the U. S. National Museum, among which the following may be mentioned: "A Study of Prehistoric Anthropology," (1888); "Results of an Inquiry as to the Existence of Man in North America During the Paleolithic Period of the Stone Age," (1888); "Criminal Anthropology" (1890); "Primitive Industry," (1892); "Minute Stone Implements from India," (1892); "The Swastika, the Earliest Known Symbol," (1895); "Prehistoric Art, or the Origin of Art as Manifested in the Works of Prehistoric Man," (1897), and "Arrowpoints, Spearheads and Knives of Prehistoric Time," (1898). Col. Wilson made a success of everything he ever undertook. He was an excellent mechanic, a good lawyer, a soldier who made a proud record in active service, and he won a high place among the scientific men of America. He took an active interest in the Historical Department of Iowa, and had made to its collections several important additions.
