

= Timothy Blackstone =

Timothy Beach Blackstone (March 28 , 1829 ? May 26 , 1900) was a 19th @-@ century railroad executive , businessman , philanthropist , and politician . He is descended from one of the earliest British settlers of New England , William Blaxton . Blackstone worked in the railroad industry for most of his life after dropping out of school . At the time of his death , his estate was worth US \$ 6 million (\$ 170 @.@ 7 million today) .

Blackstone served as president of the Chicago and Alton Railroad from 1864 through 1899 , was a founding president of the Union Stock Yards , and served one term as mayor of La Salle , Illinois . An active philanthropist , Blackstone was the benefactor of the James Blackstone Memorial Library in Branford , Connecticut . A nearly identical library , Blackstone Memorial Library , was donated to the Chicago Public Library by Timothy Blackstone 's widow in 1902 . The Blackstones also funded Blackstone Hall for the Art Institute of Chicago Building . Chicago 's Blackstone Library is the first dedicated branch of the Chicago Public Library system , and later his mansion became the site of the Blackstone Hotel and the Blackstone Theatre .

= = Early life = =

Blackstone was born in Branford , Connecticut , the sixth child , and fourth son , of James Blackstone and Sarah Beach . His father , James , served in the Connecticut Senate representing the sixth district . James had also served in the Connecticut House of Representatives and the Connecticut militia . The family is descended from William Blaxton , an English settler who arrived in New England in the seventeenth century and became the first European settler in Rhode Island . William Blackstone , an English judge and jurist , is a distant cousin .

Health issues caused Blackstone to drop out of school in 1847 , and he began working for Roswell B. Mason , surveying the New York and New Haven Railroad (NY & NH) . He only worked on the NY & NH for a year before becoming an assistant engineer on the Stockbridge and Pittsfield Railroad . Again , he only remained with the firm a short time before leaving for the Vermont Valley Railroad . In 1851 , Roswell invited Blackstone to supervise construction of the Illinois Central Railroad between Bloomington and Dixon , Illinois . Blackstone accepted the job and moved to La Salle , Illinois .

= = Career and life = =

Blackstone was elected mayor of LaSalle in 1854 and served a single term , his only foray into politics . After leaving office , he returned to working on railroads , first as chief engineer of the Joliet and Chicago Railroad , which would eventually become the Chicago and Alton Railroad . Blackstone became president of the Joliet and Chicago Railroad in 1861 , and he kept the line solvent while other divisions were filing for bankruptcy . When the system was reorganized , he was named president of the board of directors for the company , serving with John Drake . Although Blackstone served with the Alton Railroad for more than a quarter century , he refused a salary . When the directors voted to pay him \$ 10 @,@ 000 per year , he turned it down . In addition to his employment and activities with the railroads , Blackstone was the first president of the company that controlled the Union Stock Yards .

Although Blackstone had refused a salary from the railroad , he was an investor in it . In 1899 , a competing group of investors headed by E. H. Harriman wanted to purchase the Alton Railroad but Blackstone disapproved of the sale . After many months of wrangling , Blackstone transferred all of his stock in the company to the United States Trust Company and resigned as president , effective April 1 , 1899 . This action allowed the Harriman @-@ led group to assume control of the line .

In 1868 , Blackstone married Isabella Farnsworth Norton , the daughter of a successful businessman from Norwich , Connecticut . Blackstone died of pneumonia on May 26 , 1900 , in Chicago , Illinois . His funeral was held at the Second Presbyterian Church and was then transported to Norwich , Connecticut for burial .

== Blackstone Mansion ==

Blackstone built a 19th @-@ century mansion for himself at 252 Michigan Avenue in Chicago in what is now the Historic Michigan Boulevard District . The property later became the site of the Blackstone Hotel and the Blackstone Theatre . Following the Great Chicago Fire in 1871 , he invited his friend John Crerar to stay with him , which Crerar did for twelve years . Crerar donated the John Crerar Library and Blackstone continued to donate funds toward the maintenance of the building throughout his life . The Crerar Library has now merged with the University of Chicago .

== Bequests ==

Blackstone donated a library of 5 @,@ 000 books and a building to the city of Branford , Connecticut with the only stipulation that it be named in honor of his father . A charter was devised for the library by the Connecticut State Legislature vesting control of the library in a self @-@ perpetuating board of trustees consisting of six residents of Branford and the librarian of Yale University . The building was designed by Chicago architect Solon Spencer Beman . The library was constructed from 1893 ? 96 .

In 1904 , Isabella Blackstone donated the T.B. Blackstone Memorial Branch Library to the city of Chicago . Located at the intersection of Blackstone Avenue , Lake Park Avenue , and Forty @-@ Ninth Street , the library is modeled after the James Blackstone Library in Branford , Connecticut . Blackstone Avenue running along the 1436 east block from 4900 south (starting behind Blackstone Library) to 10350 south is named after him .

Also , the Blackstone 's funded Blackstone Hall in the Art Institute of Chicago Building . The two @-@ story ground level gallery was added next to the east wall of the original building for display of architectural and sculptural casts .

The New York Times published details of his will . When Blackstone died , his will directed the disposition of his assets that amounted to US \$ 6 million (\$ 170 @.@ 7 million today) . Of that total , \$ 375 @,@ 000 was bequeathed to relatives and \$ 250 @,@ 000 to public institutions (Chicago Art Institute , Chicago Orphan Asylum , Home for the Friendless at Chicago , St. Luke 's Hospital , Passavant Memorial Hospital , Chicago Relief and Aid Society , \$ 25 @,@ 000 each and James Blackstone Memorial Library Association , \$ 100 @,@ 000) . The remainder went to his widow . Blackstone was also a close associate of his cousin , William Eugene Blackstone .