

Civil War veterans were recognized in obituaries

As the 19th century came to an end, it was apparent that one by one the local members of the G.A.R. (the Great Army of the Republic) were slipping away, or, as the *Bloomington Telephone* of Dec. 8, 1899, put it in regard to one veteran, "the soul took its flight to the eternal beyond."

The subject of that prose was William B. Hughes, "a leading citizen, a soldier of the war of the rebellion, and a Christian gentleman." According to the newspaper, his death was expected.

The obituary for Capt. Hughes is fairly typical of the ones written for Civil War veterans. There is a reverence in its tone and length that reflects the affection that Monroe Countians had for its aging soldiers.

The readers were reminded that Hughes had been in ill health and had gone to Hot Springs in the hope of prolonging his life, "...but all was without results, and when he returned several months later, apparently no better, friends began to give up hope."



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

Capt. Hughes was aware of his deteriorating health and while "hoping for the best," bore his worsening condition with patience. He was mercifully in a coma when he died. The cause of his death was not mentioned in the obituary.

According to the *Telephone*, Hughes was born on Aug. 16 in 1838 "in what is known as the old Prof. Campbell property on south Morton street, near the planing mill." His parents, David and Nancy, were natives of North Carolina and early settlers in Monroe County.

Hughes tried his hand at several occupations and taught school before taking a job on the railroad. Then there was an apprentice-

ship with the Seward Foundry. He worked as a blacksmith until he was broke out.

His 6-month enlistment was followed by another enlistment in Company E of the 117th Indiana Regiment. The unit was involved in several battles.

Hughes was married after the war to Sarah Winfrey, who lived until 1894. Only four years before his death he married again.

The *Telephone* described Hughes' public career. "He had been connected with the official life of the city to a great extent and served as councilman for several terms. For many years he was chief of the fire department and was instrumental in organizing and maintaining the old volunteer department."

In the business world, Hughes was a director of the Monroe County Bank and the Workingmen's Building Association. His primary business encompassed coal and lumber.

Hughes was a Methodist, a member of the Masonic "fraternity" and an Odd Fellow.

Politically, he was a Republican.

His funeral was held in the College Avenue Methodist Church. In a separate article, the *Telephone* informed its readers who did not attend the funeral that the Fire Department, Odd Fellows, G.A.R. and the Masons attended in a body. A separate service was conducted by the Masons.

Pall bearers were Capt. W.J. Allen and W.M. Alexander from the G.A.R.; James D. Showers and W.A. Fulwider from the College Avenue Methodist Church; R.A. Fulk and C.N. Neeld from the Odd Fellows; and Samuel Gilmore and L.V. Buskirk from the Masons.

There was music at the funeral provided by Mrs. J.M. Goodwin and Miss Violet Abell and Messrs. Bracken and Pauley, who sang "Beautiful Isle of Somewhere" and "Sometime We'll Understand."

Taps was played over his grave in Rose Hill Cemetery.

H-T 4/14/97