

IN MEMORIAM

**David M. Hanson**

• March 3, 1826 • March 27, 1856 •

—oOo—

Legislative Council  
Minnesota Legislative Assembly  
St. Paul, Minnesota

January 7, 1857



Council, and again won,<sup>3</sup> but this time his Whig opponent, Bassett contested his victory. The challenge was not successful.<sup>4</sup>

Territorial newspapers covered the proceedings of the Territorial Legislature in excruciating detail, almost like a court reporter, and in them Hanson was mentioned on most every page as he introduced bills, made motions and served on committees. For some reason, in his second term, he introduced a bill that would have repealed legislation barring imprisonment for debt. This unleashed the ire of the *Minnesota Weekly Times*:

Imprisonment for Debt. —Almost the first act of Mr. Hanson on securing his seat, was to give notice that he should introduce a bill repealing the act abolishing imprisonment for debt. We ask the people to mark this and mark the person who introduces the bill. In the name of humanity, we ask, shall this black law again darken the pages of the statute ?— Gentlemen, you are on the brink of the Rubicon—pause!<sup>5</sup>

Toward the end of the session of the Assembly in 1856, he contracted typhoid fever. He died on March 27, 1856, age 30. In its issue on March 29, 1856, *The Weekly Minnesotian* carried two stories. The first was a bleak prognosis dated March 26:

Hon. D. M. Hanson.—This gentleman, we regret to learn, is lying dangerously ill at his residence in Minneapolis, and is

---

<sup>3</sup> *The Weekly Minnesotian*, October 31, 1855, at 2 (returns from Hennepin County: D. M. Hanson, Democrat, 475 votes; J. B. Basset, Whig, 455). District 11 consisted of Hennepin, Carver and Davis Counties. *Minnesota Weekly Times*, August 14, 1855, at 4.

<sup>4</sup> *The Weekly Pioneer and Democrat*, January 17, 1856, at 3 (“The cases of Howell vs. Tillotson, Ottman vs. Lowry, and Bassett vs. Hanson, have been heard and determined. . . . But in two of their cases — Ottman vs. Lowry and Bassett vs. Hanson—the reports of the committees, in each of which the Republican side was represented, were unanimous against the contestants; and the decision of the Council endorsed that of the committers with almost equal unanimity.”).

<sup>5</sup> *Minnesota Weekly Times*, January 19, 1856, at 1.

supposed to be almost beyond hope of recovery. A report has been circulated by some of our city papers, that he died on Monday evening, but such is not the fact.<sup>6</sup>

The second, a page later, dated Friday, March 28, reported his death:

#### Death of Hon. D. M. Hanson.

The decease of this gentleman which occurred on Wednesday night, from typhoid fever, at his residence in Minneapolis, though not unexpected, causes a deep gloom throughout the community. He had been ill for several weeks.

The deceased was a lawyer of much promise and member of the Council. During the recent session of the Legislature he was prevented for a number of weeks from attending its deliberations, in consequence of illness, but recovered sufficiently to be present during the last few days. He returned home—where he was taken with a relapse, which terminated his existence.

He was a native of Maine, but had resided in Wisconsin for a few years previous to his coming to our Territory. His age was about twenty-seven years (sic). He leaves a family to mourn his untimely decease.

The funeral will take place to-morrow at 12 o'clock, M., at which the friends of the deceased and the Masonic Fraternity are invited to attend.<sup>7</sup>

From the *Sauk Rapids Frontiersman*, April 10, 1856:

#### DEATH OF HON. D. M. HANSON

---

Hon. D. M. Hanson, died at his residence in this place, and one o'clock A. M. on Thursday morning, last, of typhoid fever, after two weeks of severe suffering. He was born in the parish of St.

---

<sup>6</sup> *The Weekly Minnesotian*, March 29, 1856, at 2.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*, at 3.

George, town of Maggoudorick, New Brunswick, March 3, 1826. He has been stricken down a young man in the prime of life. A lawyer of great ability, and possessed of many generous and noble qualities, he had become somewhat distinguished in public life. He was elected Counselor last fall, after having served one term in the Territorial Legislature. As is common in mortals, in some respects, in the course of his short public career, he may not have sustained himself accordingly to the wishes and judgment of friends; but whatever faults he may have possessed, let them be buried in the silent tomb to which his remains are this day consigned. We have known Mr. Hanson well in life; we have acted in concert with him as a confidential friend, and as such, we would follow him to his final resting place, trusting in God for his future happiness, and to his widow and friends, the community join in extending their sympathy and generous kindness.

He will be buried by the brotherhood of Masons, of which he was a member, at 12 o'clock M., this day. —*N. W.*<sup>8</sup>

According to *The Weekly Minnesotian* Hanson's funeral was attended by more mourners than any other funeral yet in the Territory:

#### Funeral of the late Hon. D. M. Hanson

The funeral of the late Hon. D. M. Hanson was attended on Saturday last by a very large concourse of people, much larger than we have ever witnessed on any similar occasion in the Territory.

The attendance from St. Paul was also large, principally composed of the Masonic fraternity, of which the deceased was a worthy member.

The procession, composed of members of the Hennepin Lodge, of Minneapolis, Cataract Lodge of St. Anthony, St. Paul Lodge, Ancient Landmark Lodge, and Minnesota R. A. C, of St. Paul, on foot; the friends and relatives of the deceased and citizens in general in carriages, moved from the deceased's late residence in

---

<sup>8</sup> *Sauk Rapids Frontiersman*, April 10, 1856, at 2.

Minneapolis, about 12 o'clock to the Congregational Church in St. Anthony, where an appropriate discourse was delivered by the pastor in charge. The church was filled long before the procession arrived, and after its arrival was densely crowded; and scarcely one third were able to gain an entrance.

After the services at the Church were over the procession moved again in the same order to the cemetery about a mile north of St. Charles, where the Masonic burial rites were performed in the presence of a large concourse of people.

The whole procession was more than half a mile in extent. The number of Masons on foot, closed in appropriate regalia, was upwards of one hundred.<sup>9</sup>

Several months later *The Minnesota Weekly Times* published memorials to two residents, including Hanson:

The Dead ! — Three brief months during our absence, has laid in the tomb two young men who were wont to mingle with us in the active cares of life—who but last year at this time were as full of ambition and bright hopes as we are to-day—who trod the rosy path of life and reached forward to the gay castles that floated in the ether, but we look about us and find them not!—They are gone, gone, gone forever!

. . .

Mr. D. M. Hanson was a young lawyer, who by the force of his own intellect and energy, had attained a political and social position much beyond the common mass of young men. He had been a member of the Legislature twice, and was evidently looking to a more prominent position when death arrested his career. Just settled in life, with all the bright future before him, he too was taken, and the place that knew him, knows him no more.— Thus have two passed from the platform in the brief space of three

---

<sup>9</sup> *The Weekly Minnesotian*, April 5, 1856, at 1.

months. We cannot pull back the curtain that hides the future and say who comes next, but we can say—"Be ye also ready."<sup>10</sup>

His former colleagues in the legislature did not forget him. At the first meeting of the Council on Wednesday, January 7, 1857, President Brisbin delivered a eulogy, as reported in the *Minnesota Weekly Times*:

Mr. Brisbin having received a majority of all the votes cast was declared duly elected President of the Council for the present session. After being sworn in and conducted to his seat, he made the following speech:

Councillors of Minnesota:—

. . .

When we look around us and mingle, our congratulations at the opening of this session, we are painfully reminded that one is not here—that the pale but remorseless hand has been laid upon one of the best and brightest of our number, and the place which knew him but one short year ago, now knows him no more. David M. Hanson, in the prime of his promising years, with the first fruits of his dauntless energy and his honorable ambition just flush and green upon him, has gone—

“To that high Capital where singly Death  
holds his pale Court in beauty and decay.”

Let us not be unmindful that lessons like these have their application to ourselves.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> *Minnesota Weekly Times*, May 17, 1856, at 3.

<sup>11</sup> *Minnesota Weekly Times*, January 10, 1857, at 2, reprinted in the *Rice County Herald*, January 15, 1857, at 2.

## Appendix

Hanson did not place his business card in territorial newspapers but a firm that shared offices with him referred to his law office in an ad it in *The Weekly Minnesotian*, October 14, 1855, at 2:

|  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| <b>GEO N PROPPER</b>   | <b>CARLOS WILCOX</b> |
| <b>Propper &amp; Wilcox.</b>   |                      |
| <i>Practical Surveyors and General Land Agents,</i>  |                      |
| Office, with D M Hanson, Attorney-at-Law, Second street<br>near the U S Land Office, Minneapolls, Minnesota Ter.   |                      |
| <b>S</b> URVEYING and Platting of all descriptions done with<br>accuracy Particular attention given to surveying<br>and locating government lands in the pineries and else-<br>where in the territory Gold and land warrants are in re-<br>quest, investments made or loans negotiated, collections<br>made and taxes paid; agencies solicited Strangers and<br>citizens wishing to locate, sell or purchase lands are in-<br>vited to call Claimants can make advantageous arrange-<br>ments with us for their <i>purchase money</i> Valuable prop-<br>erty now and always on hand in the embryo cities of<br>Minneapolis, St Anthony and St Paul; also, improved<br>farms, rural and pine lands, all of which we offer on the<br>most liberal terms We respectfully solicit and hope to<br><i>meet a share of public and private trust</i> |                      |
| Aug 18, 1854   | d&w                  |