

IN MEMORIAM

JOHN F. McGOVERN

(1860 - 1905)

**DISTRICT COURT
WABASHA COUNTY
WABASHA COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION
MAY 15, 1905**

JOHN F. McGOVERN

(1860 - 1905)

“John F. McGovern, a brilliant Irish attorney and probably the best trial lawyer who has ever practiced in Wabasha.”

- John W. Murdoch (1954) -

John McGovern, Mayor of Wabasha, newspaper owner, and lawyer died on February 5, 1905, at age forty-four. He had practiced law in Wabasha for over twenty-three years. Several days later, the *Wabasha Standard*, a weekly newspaper, carried the following obituary on its front page followed by “resolutions of respect” passed by two fraternal orders.

Passing of a Prominent Citizen.*

For a long time the inevitable was expected and it was not thought that the life of J. F. McGovern, would be spared to the community as long as it was. Sunday morning at 2 o'clock the end came and he passed to that sleep that knows no waking peacefully and resignedly.

Mr. McGovern was a genial and wholesouled man. He could not do too much for a friend and always had something for one in distress, as many can testify.

He was a native of Amboy, Ill., and was born 44 years ago last

* *Wabasha Standard*, February 9, 1905, at 1.

October. From 1873 to 1876 he was a student in St. Michael's College, Toronto, Ontario, and was a student at St. Joseph's College, Dubuque, Io., and read law in the office of Senator Allison. He entered the law department of the Iowa State University and graduated from that institution in 1880. He came to Wabasha in the year 1881, and began the practice of law under the firm name of Van Horn & McGovern, and later as Steel & McGovern and still later as McGovern & Murdock, which continued until his death. He was also senior member of the firm of McGovern & Keating, publishers of the Herald.

Mr. McGovern's standing as a lawyer and publisher was excellent and the two combined gave him a large acquaintanceship throughout the eastern part of the state.

In politics deceased was a democrat and that party in 1882 nominated and elected him county attorney in which office he served two terms. In 1892 he was again nominated and elected and served two terms. In 1902 his party gave him the nomination for representative in the state legislature, but the county had become republican and as a result he was defeated. He was clerk of the school board for a number of years.

In 1904 he was elected mayor of the city of Wabasha without opposition and would have been elected to his second term had he lived. During his incumbency he strove to be just and give the city a good administration. He was not able to be present at all meetings, but his presence was always felt for he was not at all chary about expressing his views upon matters that concerned the city.

On Aug. 12, 1883, he was married to Miss Mayme Evans,

daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Evans. Four sons were born to them as follows: Harry, Bernerd, John and William, all of whom survive him.

Deceased was a member of five orders; Modern Woodmen of America, Independent Order of Foresters, Modern Samaritans, Ancient Order of United Workmen, and the Order of Elks.

The funeral took place Tuesday morning at 11 o'clock from St. Felix church. The bar of this portion of the state was well represented. The honorary pall-bearers were: Judge C. M. Start, Judge A. H. Snow, Attorneys H. L. Buck, L. L. Brown, M. B. Webber and Clerk of Court C. H. Stauff. Attorneys Earl Simpson and D. E. Tawney of Winona, Theodore Buehler of Alma, and Postmaster Gartside and Joseph Leicht of Winona were also present.

Dr. and Mrs. Gregory (sister) of Freeport, Ill., were also present as well as O. F. Collier, M. Jacoby, Herman Achenbach of Duluth, and about twenty members of Elks from Winona.

J. F. M'GOVERN DEAD.

On Saturday evening of last week at his home at Wabasha, Minn., occurred the death of J. F. McGovern of the firm of McGovern & Keating, publishers of the Wabasha Herald. Mr. McGovern had been in poor health for years, and had been near unto death many times but had rallied, but each time left him a little less able to fight the next battle. "Mac," as he was commonly known, was one of the ablest writers and deepest thinkers in the newspaper business in this section of the country, and one to whom we all doffed our hats. He was also

one of the most able lawyers in this section of the country. In his death the Herald has lost its rudder, but Bro. Keating is still at the helm and may be depended upon to guide the paper through the storm of adversity.

The McGovern funeral was held at Wabasha to-day.

RESOLUTIONS OF RESPECT

Following resolutions were passed by Wabasha Council, No. 44, Modern Samaritans:

Whereas, It has pleased the Almighty Ruler to call our esteemed neighbor, John F. McGovern from our midst, to the Supreme Council above; and

Whereas, In the loss of Neighbor McGovern our council has loss a most esteemed neighbor, our community a highly respected citizen and public official, and his family a loving husband and father, therefore, be it

Resolved, That we extend to his family our heartfelt sympathy in this their hour of bereavement, and assure them that they sorrow alone, but that his death is keenly felt by neighbors and friends throughout the entire community.

DR. C. H. ROBINSON,
GEO. J. GINTNER,
J. L. GENNAGLE.
Committee.

Whereas, The Great Spirit has seen fit to remove from our

immediate presence, our brother, John F. McGovern, of the 5th Sun. Snow and Moon, G. S. D., 414, therefore, be it

Resolved, That we as members of Wabasha Tribe No. 27, of Wabasha, Minn., extend our heartfelt sympathy to the bereaved family and assure them that the tribe mourns the loss with them; and be it further

Resolved, That we drape our chapter for a period of thirty days and spread a copy of these resolutions on a page of our records; and be it

Resolved, That we send a copy of these resolutions to the Speaking Leaf, to our local papers for publication and a copy to the family of our deceased brother.

G. M. CHADWICK
CHRIST GRASS,
GEO J. GINTNER,
Committee.

On May 15, 1905, the Wabasha County Bar Association passed the following resolutions in his honor, and they were filed by Charles Stauff, the clerk of court, the next day:

Resolutions adopted by the Wabasha County Bar,
in memory of John F. McGovern.

At an adjourned term of this Court held at Wabasha on February 12th, 1905, it was deemed befitting and proper by the members of the Wabasha County Bar, to adopt resolutions pursuant to the general practice of the bar on such occasions, recognizing the character, ability and services of our departed brother John F, McGovern, who had been removed from our midst by the messenger of death, on the Fifth day of February, 1905, and for that purpose a committee was

appointed, and directed to draft suitable resolutions, and we as the committee appointed to draft the same submit the following.

Our brother John F, McGovern, died on February Fifth, 1905, in the 45th year of his age. He came to Wabasha County and was admitted to the bar as a practicing attorney at law in 1881, and has ever since that time resided at Wabasha where his remains are laid at rest.

By the death of our friend and brother we stand in the shadow of a great loss. The hearts of the members of this bar, as of all who have been privileged to know him in the community and business world, are touched with a common sorrow, and they, together with us, share with his bereaved family in the grief of the separation which has come to them. It cannot be otherwise when we are called to break earthly fellowship with one whom we have long known, respected and admired.

As a member of this bar for nearly 24 years, his life had become an integral part of the life of the bar — so intermingling itself in common experiences of joy and sorrow that it will always be of grateful memory.

In this hour of sadness we delight to recall his winning manner, his sympathetic and affectionate nature, his abundant, gifts of mind, and the graces of which he seemed himself unconscious. We know and feel his worth — it is difficult to express it as we would. His soul was open, his heart warm and tender, his purpose steadfast, his courage high, his sense of honor delicate, and his spirit of justice such that he upheld everything that made for good, while resisting whatever was founded on evil.

We shall miss his cheerful presence, his hopeful words, and his wise counsel. The workman has gone; but the work abides. The good he accomplished here can never be lost.

To the bereaved family – the beloved wife, the sons – to the home circle where father and mother have been so long crowned with honor, and to the wide circle of kindred hearts, we would express our deep sense of sorrow in their affliction.

Dated May 15th, 1905.

/s/ Henry W. Morgan
/s/ Wesley Kinney
/s/ J. T. Bowditch
Committee.

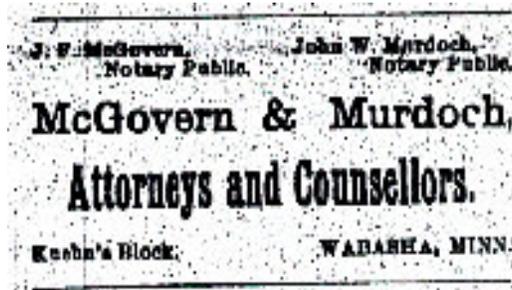
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APPENDIX

Wabasha Herald (June 11, 1896):



Wabasha Herald (March 3, 1898):



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Posted MLHP: May 15, 2012;
Appendix added April 10, 2016.