

John Walker Babson

(15 Aug 1835 - 1 Mar 1906)

Babson. On Thursday, March 1, 1906 John W. Babson aged 70 years. Funeral from his late residence 108 11th street southeast Saturday afternoon at 4:30 p.m. Interment private (Maine papers please copy).

The Evening Star, March 3, 1906

J.W. Babson's Funeral.

Interment will be in Congressional Cemetery

Deceased Engaged Extensively in Charitable Work -- Came to This City in 1861

The funeral of the late John Walker Babson will be held at 4:30 o'clock this afternoon at the Babson



MR. J. W. BABSON "EDITOR" OF THE GAZETTE.

home, 108 11th street southeast. The services will be conducted at the house by Rev. John Chester of the Metropolitan Presbyterian Church, and the interment is to be in Congressional cemetery. The pallbearers will be Mr. Chapman, principal examiner of the patent office; Mr. Amos Hadley, chief of the stationery division of the patent office; Messrs. Davis and Rust, clerks in the division over which Mr. Babson president; Gen. Ellis Spear and Mr. Y.C. Slater.

A number of floral remembrances were received today from friends and the several organizations with which Mr. Babson was connected. These include the Masonic fraternity, the Oldest Inhabitants' Association, Geographic Society, East Washington Citizens' Association, of which he was president for five years; the Board of Trade of which he was one of the directors; the Sons and Daughters of Maine, the Anthropological Society, the American Association for the

Advancement of Science, and the Eastern Dispensary and Casualty Hospital, of which he was a director and chairman of the committee on supplies.

Mr. Babson's wife, formerly Miss Eliza A. Tibbetts of Brookfield, Me., the birthplace of deceased; a daughter by his first wife, Mrs. William R. French, and a son by his last wife, Mr. John W. Babson, jr., survive him.

Originator of Patent Centennial

Mr. Babson was one of the originators of the Patent Centennial; was the chairman of the committee on scope of the general committee on the celebration of the anniversary of the laying of the corner



stone of the Capitol in 1893; was treasurer of the Admiral Dewey reception committee in 1900 and always took a leading part in all movements for the upbuilding of the national capital.

He engaged extensively in charitable work "under cover," as one of his friends expressed it today. That is, he did not believe in letting his left hand know what his right hand was doing in this sort of effort for the amelioration of human suffering. In consequence, he always substituted the name of his wife for his own, and Mrs. Babson, therefore, appears as a member of the Associated Charities, the Central Relief committee and the board of Children's Guardians, of which she is secretary.

Special meetings of the East Washington Citizens' Association and of the Oldest Inhabitants have been called for the purpose of adopting resolutions of regret and taking suitable action on the death. Delegations from these and other societies of which deceased was a member, will also attend the funeral this afternoon.

Secretary to Vice President

John Walker Babson came to this city in 1861 as secretary to Vice President Hamlin, and while serving in that capacity enjoyed a personal acquaintance with President Lincoln and other great figures in the civil war. He became chief of the finance division of the pension office in 1866, being afterward promoted to be deputy commissioner of pensions. In 1878 he was transferred to the patent office and placed in charge of the Official Gazette. The Gazette and issue divisions were consolidated in 1880, and Mr. Babson was placed in charge of the combined bureau. Since that time the Official Gazette has been continuously under his charge. When he first assumed control of the issuance of the Gazette that publication comprised about seventy-two pages. It now runs over 300 pages.

Mr. Babson was born at Brookville, Hancock county, Me., August 15, 1835, and always retained a fond love for his old home state, having been identified with every movement of the sons and daughters of Maine which has taken place here. His first public office was as postmaster at his birthplace. He gave up this place to come to Washington as Mr. Hamlin's secretary, the Vice President having great confidence in the then young and sturdy son of the state mentioned.

The History of Washington City, Its Men and Institutions

Hon. John Walker Babson, descended from an old and influential Puritan family, has been identified with the official life and public affairs of Washington since 1861, when he left his native State of Maine, and from that time until the present has uninterruptedly held important posts in the Government service, his present position being that of a chief of division in the United States Patent Office. Mr. Babson was born at Brooksville, Maine, on August 15, 1835, and is a son of Samuel Brown and Nancy Tapley Babson, both of whom died at a ripe old age. The advent of the ancestors of Mr. Babson to this country is somewhat unique. In a party of emigrants which left England in 1632 were James Babson, his wife, Isabel, and their son James, two years old. While en voyage the father died. The widow, a woman of courage and ability, proceeded to Salem, Massachusetts, and thence to Cape Ann, where a lot was apportioned to "the widow Isabel and her son James." This lot, through which now passes Front street,

Cape Ann, remained in the possession of the Babson family for upwards of 150 years. From the infant James have descended all the Babson's now in this country. A great-grandson, James Babson, who died October 10, 1790, was a captain of privateers in the Revolutionary War, and still another, who died December 30, 1831, was engaged in privateering during the War of 1812. John W. Babson, the subject of this sketch, is the seventh in lineal descent from the widow Isabel. Mr. Babson was educated in the Maine public schools, and Bluehill Academy, and finally at the Maine Wesleyan College at Redfield. Mr. Babson taught for a time at the latter institution, as well as in the public schools.

Early in life Mr. Babson manifested a keen interest in politics, and on his twenty-first birthday was elected chairman of the Republican town committee of his native town, and has participated in every campaign since then. He was president of the stormiest Republican convention ever held in Hancock county. In the Fremont campaign in 1856, when accompanying Hon. Hanibal Hamlin, afterwards Vice-President, an incident occurred by which the latter's life was endangered. A friendship then started between the two which remained unbroken until Mr. Hamlin's death. When the Lincoln administration began in 1861, Mr. Babson was made postmaster of his native town, but resigned the same year to come to Washington with Vice-President Hamlin, and remained with him until the expiration of his term in 1865, and continued an officer of the United States Senate, where he remained until February, 1866, resigning to accept an appointment tendered him by Secretary of the Interior James Harlan, in the Pension Bureau. Here he soon reached the position of chief of a division, which he held for some years. Mr. Babson was commissioned by President Grant Deputy Commissioner of Pensions on December 21, 1875. This post he resigned in February, 1877, to enter the more inviting Bureau of Patents, where in 1878 he assumed charge of the publication of the "Official Gazette," then a comparatively small weekly, which under his capable management, has expanded to its present imposing proportions. In 1880 the Issue division was absorbed by the Gazette division and it has since become known as the Issue and Gazette division, of which Mr. Babson is the chief.

In the affairs of the District he has always taken an active interest. He was one of the originators of the East Washington Citizens' Association -- the oldest organization of its character in the District, permanently organized in 1871, and in active existence since that date. He was its president for five years, voluntarily retiring, but has ever since continued a member of its executive committee. He was a member of the Old Citizens' Committee of One Hundred, and chairman of its committee appointed for the purpose of securing the selection of this city as the location of the World's Exposition of 1893, and made an exhaustive and vigorous report in its favor, which was commended by the public press. The initiative of the movement for the celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone of the National Capitol on September 18, 1893, was taken by the East Washington Citizens' Association at its monthly meeting May 5, 1893. An elaborate report made by Mr. Babson, then its president, resulted in a delegation waiting upon the District Commissioners, the calling of a public meeting, and the appointment of a general committee, of which Mr. Babson was one. He was also chairman of the committee on scope. Mr. Babson was also one of the promoters of the "Patent Centennial," held in this city April 8, 9 and 10, 1891, chairman of its central committee and a member of its executive committee. He was appointed by the Commissioners of the District on June 1, 1899, a member of the committee of one hundred to make suitable and timely preparations for Washington's welcome to Admiral Dewey, upon his return from Manila, and was selected as a member of its executive committee, and elected and served as its treasurer. Mr. Babson was a member of the special escort committee, who met Admiral Dewey at New York with a palatial railroad train on October 3, 1899. He is a member of the Board of Trade, and chairman of its committee on public library. He has now entered upon his second (three years) term as one of the directors of the Board of Trade.

Mr. Babson has twice married. His first wife was Louise A. Tibbetts of Brooklyn, Maine, to whom he was married on November 5, 1855, and who died in this city, October 2, 1863. By this marriage there were three children. His second wife was Eliza A. Tibbetts, a cousin of his former wife, to whom he was

married in Boston, Mass., September 1, 1868. Mrs. Babson has vied with her husband in active interest in the affairs of the city and has become well known in charity work. She is a member of the Board of Children's Guardians, a member of the Citizen's Relief Committee, appointed by the District Commissioners, and a veteran in the work of the Associated Charities, of the board of managers of which she has for many years been an active member. She is a member of the Church of the Reformation, and prominent in the ladies' work of that church. By this marriage there have been five children.

While for over forty years a resident of this city, and an owner of property here, Mr. Babson has retained the ownership of the old family homestead in his native town, in Maine, where his family spend their summers and he his vacation, and where he has uninterruptedly retained the right of suffrage.

The Evening Star, July 16, 1904, p. 7

A Unique Magazine

Patent Office Gazette Only One of Its Kind

Not a Money-Maker

Costs Uncle Sam a Quarter of a Million Annually

Circulates All Over the World and Is Invaluable to Its 7,000 Subscribers

"We believe that we have the widest circulation of any publication in the United States."

Such a statement one would naturally expect from the manager of the advertising section of one of the monthly magazines or the head of the circulation department of a lurid yellow daily; but it did not come from either class. It was simply the modest avowal of Mr. J.W. Babson, chief of the division of issue and gazette of the patent office, when he was asked for facts as to the circulation of the Official Gazette of the patent office. Figures were what the inquirer demanded, however, and Mr. Babson coughed apologetically as he answered:

"The widest circulation, I said. We print only 7,000 copies of the Gazette."

One familiar with the claims of the advertising men connected with the big magazines, weeklies and dailies would laugh at the claim of Mr. Babson when supplemented by such a statement as to the actual number of copies published, yet he was not varying from the truth in any particular. There is probably no publication in the world which has as wide a circulation as the Patent Office Gazette. There are many papers that print and sell a million copies of every issue whose owners would pay as many dollars as they print copies if their journals could be distributed as impartially in every section of the civilized world as this particular publication of the patent office is distributed. The profits that would accrue from the advertising to be gained in this manner would be simply enormous.

But that is only one of the features of the Gazette that is unique in the world of publishers. It is larger than any weekly or monthly published in this country, the last issue, that of July 12, containing 269 illustrated pages, besides editorials and indices. Of this number of pages every inch of space was devoted to advertising some particular thing in which the publisher, the United States, has absolutely no proprietary interest of any kind whatever, and from the sale of which it can derive absolutely no direct benefit. That is not all of the strangeness of this strange periodical. All its advertising is absolutely free of charge to the advertiser. It would not be a profitable sort of publication for a private firm to issue. It has an editorial force of fourteen people, who are paid, in aggregate, about \$15,000 per year; the photolithographic work in connection with its illustrations cost last year \$82,800, and the bill for the printing amounted to \$159,000, making a total cost of publication \$256,800. The subscription price is \$5 per year, so that with its 7,000 copies the income from subscriptions, the only income it could have, could not be more than \$35,000 under any circumstances, and as it happens its paid subscription list does not contain more than 2,300 names, the bulk of the remaining 4,700 copies being distributed free of charge. So it would seem that the publishers of this remarkable magazine lost last year \$221,800, and

created a proportionate deficit annually every year of the thirty-two it has been published in its present form.

The Patent Office Gazette is, however, one of the most valuable of the government publications and the persons interested in that class of literature know that it is worth far more to the country than the paltry quarter of a million it costs. The value of the Gazette is not to be estimated in mere figures, it is said, because it is the only means that exists for introducing to the public the new children, in the form of inventions, that are born of old mother necessity, as represented by the industrial and economic conditions. It is through the Gazette, first of all, that the people are made acquainted with the ingenious contrivances and devices that have emanated from the inventive minds of the world which tend toward the progress of civilization and the reduction of the cost of production. Thomas A. Edison and Alexander Graham Bell received their first taste of publicity through the columns of this periodical, and thousands of labor-saving devices have been brought to the attention of men who had money to manufacture and put them on the market through this valuable publication. In the Gazette the government of the United States takes the form of a proud father showing and explaining to his friends and neighbors some remarkable production of his children. It is one of the quiet ways in which Uncle Sam advertises the greatness of his people.

Gen. M.D. Leggett, commissioner of patents, from 1871 to 1874, was the originator of the Gazette in its present weekly form. For about twenty years prior to the publication of the weekly bulletin the office had been in the habit of issuing annual reports of the patents issued and he decisions of the commissioner. It was found that these reports did not accomplish the good it was intended they should, because the matter did not reach the persons interested in time to be of any great value. Therefore Commissioner Leggett decided to make a change and on January 8, 1872, the first issue of the weekly gazette was published. In this issue Commissioner Leggett printed an editorial on the first page in which he stated:

"The principal contents of the Gazette will be a list of all inventions patented in the United States, accompanied with a transcript of the claims, the names and residences of the patentees and with appropriate indices, a list of designs patented, of disclaimers filed and trademarks registered, a list of all pending applications for the extension of patents and of all extensions granted, decisions by the commissioner of patents, current decisions of the courts in trademark and patent causes, and such miscellaneous matter, including changes in the rules of office practice, modification of the patent law, special legislation affecting particular patents and kindred subjects, as may seem to be of interest to inventors and patent attorneys and properly find place in an official journal.

Mr. Edward H. Knight of Ohio, a principal examiner in the patent office, was the first "editor" of the Gazette. Part of the work which Mr. Knight had been doing consisted of preparing an index of all he inventions filed in the patent office from 1790 to date, and he was considered the best man to keep the index, for such the Gazette was to be, up to date at all times. The first copy of the Gazette was of the same shape of the present issue, but included only thirty pages.

Mr. Knight was succeeded as editor in 1875 by Mr. W.A. Bartlet of New York. He remained in office until 1877, when Mr. Frank Burr, a newspaper man of West Virginia, was placed in charge. Mr. Burr became a candidate for Congress from his home district and resigned his office in 1878, when Mr. J.W. Babson, the present editor, was placed in charge.

To obtain the advertisement the Gazette gives to his production a patentee must first have his patent allowed. He sends in his application for a patent, containing a complete copy of the specifications, drawings and claims of improvement he desires to show, accompanied by the first fee of \$15. The papers are placed in a jacket, are given a serial number and are then sent to the examiner in charge of the particular class of inventions to which the device belongs, who examines the specifications, drawings and claims carefully, going over all similar cases to be sure that the ideas of the applicant are new and are patentable. If the patent is allowed by the examiner the papers are

forwarded to the division of issue and gazette, where they are again examined to see that they are all in proper form, and the inventor is then notified that his claims have been allowed and a patent will be issued to him covering them on receipt of the final fee of \$20. The papers are then put in a file with other patents allowed to await word from the inventor. He is given six months in which to pay the final fee. If he does not pay in that time the claims go back to the old files of the office. After the inventor has promptly forwarded his final fee the papers are withdrawn from the allowance files and the drawings, specifications and claims are sent to the contractor having the contract for making copies and are printed for file and issue. One copy is embossed on bond paper, and after being duly signed and sealed by the commissioner it is forwarded to the patentee. The claims for patent that are allowed are then sent to the government printing office, where they are printed in large type in columns five inches wide. The printed claims are then sent back to the division of issue and gazette and the work of making up the Gazette commences. Mr. Babson, as the editor, exercises supervision over the whole process. He has thirteen members on his staff.

An interesting item for the student of the cost of production is furnished by a study and comparison of the prices paid by the government for this particular part of the work during years when the contract was let without competition and years when there was keen competition. This subject has been brought forcibly to the attention of the officials of the office lately by reason of the fact that an out-of-town firm underbid the old contractor for the work by about \$7,000 in the competition last month. In 1890 there was no competition for the contract, and the total cost to the office for all its photolithographic work was \$242,931.17. In 1896 the work was about 5 per cent less than in 1890 and there was competition of the keenest kind. As a result of this competition the work was done that year for \$130,384.78, or about 86 per cent less than it had cost six years before