

John R. Mahoney

(10 Jan 1846 – 7 Aug 1940)

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Inhabitants Fete John R. Mahoney

Roosevelt, by Letter, Joins Association in Honoring Financial Secretary

Congratulated by personal letters from President Roosevelt and others, and by a capacity audience of his friends and associates, John R. Mahoney, a vice president and financial secretary of the of Oldest

Congratulated by President



John R. Mahoney, vice president and financial secretary of the Association of Oldest Inhabitants, who is either 90, 91 or 92, is shown reading a congratulatory letter from President Roosevelt last night at a birthday party staged for him by the association. Some of Mr. Mahoney's family grouped around him are (left to right): Mrs. Bertha M. Davis, a niece; Mrs. Emily C. Pollock, his daughter, and C. Wesley Mahoney, his grandson. —Star Staff Photo.

Inhabitants, celebrated his birthday last night at Old Union Engine House – but whether it was his 90th, 91st or 92nd, was left somewhat in the air.

He received felicitations on all three ages, admitted he had lost his 90th birthday somewhere along the line – probably last year – but said he preferred to believe the record in the family Bible, which fixed his age as 91.

Music made the venerable rafters of Old Union Engine House ring, and when it was all over “Patriarch” Mahoney said he felt like dancing, but turned rather to visiting with his many friends.

Looks to 100th Birthday

His speech of response was pithy, characteristically humorous, and looked to the future, when he hopes to celebrate his 100th anniversary.

Denying he was proud from egotism, Mr. Mahoney expressed a pardonable pride in the occasion, and in the appreciation expressed during the evening. He praised the Association of Oldest Inhabitants as “old and honorable,” and predicted it would outlive the building in which now it is housed. He hoped to see some day a new home for the organization, with modern improvements and comfort for members, and space for the many museum relics now housed in the Old Union Engine House, where the association meets. Mr. Mahoney recalled that a prediction of his 10 years ago had come true – that shacks along Pennsylvania Avenue between the Capitol and Treasury would disappear. One of the things of which he said he was proud was that he had seen the Nation’s Capital, where horses, pigs and cows roamed the open spaces, changed to a city of beauty and grandeur.”

Heurich Sends Flowers

In addition to the letters of felicitation and informal remarks of the evening, Mr. Mahoney was the recipient of several gifts including a huge bouquet of flowers from Mr. and Mrs. Christian Heurich. Mr. Heurich, it was pointed out by Jesse C. Suter, a vice president of the association, who presided, is the oldest member of the association, now 94 years of age.

In reviewing Mr. Mahoney’s career, Mr. Suter pointed out his life stretched back to the days when James K. Polk was President of the United States, former President John Quincy Adams was serving as a member of the House and Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun and Daniel Webster were leaders in Congress. The population of this city then was only 51,687, he pointed out, during the time when the temperance and total abstinence movement began to sweep the country.

Temperance Activity Cited

Pointing to Mr. Mahoney's activity in the temperance movement, Mr. Suter referred to his public lectures for abstinence, membership in the Rechabites, and how a meeting of temperance leaders here in Washington led to formation of the Anti-Saloon League of the District of Columbia. Mr. Suter said the formation of the Anti-Saloon League of America really started, therefore, in Mr. Mahoney's "parlor," instead of in Ohio, its generally accredited birthplace. Mr. Mahoney was ruler of the Grand Tent of the District of Columbia Rechabites for two years and for many years was high tent secretary for the Nation.

Theodore W. Noyes, president of the Association of Oldest Inhabitants, in a letter to Mr. Mahoney, read to the assembly by Mr. Suter, declared: "We celebrate tonight with rejoicing the 91st, 90th or 92d birthday of Patriarch Mahoney (for final figures see latest family Bible returns) – the oldest of our members in the association's official service as financial secretary.

"We pay tribute to his fine qualities of mind and heart, and to his influence for good in his lifelong fight against John Barleycorn.

"Our hearty congratulations and best wishes for health and for indefinite prolongation of a long and happy life to our highly valued friend of sound common sense, and frank, blunt speech. May God bless him always!"

Best Wishes From Roosevelt

President Roosevelt was one of those who picked the age of 92 for Mr. Mahoney in his congratulations. "It gives me real pleasure," wrote the President, "to send you my congratulations and very best wishes on this occasion." John Clagett Proctor read an original poem in tribute.

The Chesapeake & Potomac Telephone Glee Club, Robert H. Davidson, director, presented a program of several choral numbers, with George Small in a feature solo of harmonics and guitar. Director Davidson read original poems. The club was roundly applauded. Other musicians also much appreciated were Mrs. Ruth Dowling Halsted, soprano, accompanied by Mrs. Elisabeth Collison Hill, and Miss Mildred Deane, accompanist. The invocation was by Rev. R.I. Barnes of North Carolina Methodist Protestant Church.

The committee in charge consisted of Walter E. Allen, chairman; Henry A. Burr, Harry W. Dowling, E.C. Palmer, Jesse C. Suter and J.H.A. Fowler.

Mahoney, John R. On Wednesday, August 7, 1940, at Sibley Hospital, John R. Mahoney, beloved husband of the late Sarah E. Mahoney of 333 C st. s.e. Funeral from the James T. Ryan funeral home, 317 Pa. ave. s.e., on Friday, August 9, at 2 p.m. Relatives and friends invited. Interment Congressional Cemetery.



Mahoney, John R. On Wednesday, August 7, 1940, John R. Mahoney, aged 94. Our brother was High Tent secretary of Independent Order of Rechabites for 25 years and a member of our order for about 75 years. All Rechabites are invited to meet at Ryan's funeral home, 317 Pa. ave. s.e., on Thursday, August 8, at 8 p.m., for memorial service.

Mrs. Susie Clarkson, Chief Ruler

Mrs. Minnie E. Kissinger, Rec. Sec.

Mahoney, John R. Members of the Association of the Oldest Inhabitants are requested to attend the funeral of our late associate, John R. Mahoney. Services at the James T. Ryan funeral home, 317 Pa. ave. s.e., on Friday, August 9, 1940, at 2 p.m.

Theodore W. Noyes, President

John B. Dickman, Sr., Secretary

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**John R. Mahoney, 94, District Temperance Figure, Succumbs
Anti-Saloon League's Founding Sometimes Is Credited to Him**

John R. Mahoney, 94, the District's "grand old man" of temperance, died early today in Sibley Hospital after an illness of six weeks.

Mr. Mahoney, who was one of the Capital's oldest inhabitants, became a temperance advocate early in life. He is sometimes credited with having been responsible for the founding of the Anti-Saloon League of America.

He was ruler of the Grand Tent of the District of Columbia Rechabites for two years and for many years was high tent secretary for the Nation. A vice president of the Association of Oldest Inhabitants, he served as the group's financial secretary 36 years.

Mr. Mahoney was born in Indian Territory, now Oklahoma, and came to Washington when about 12 years old. In the 1860's he was a policeman, but was best known professionally as a paper hanger. For a great many years he operated his own paper-hanging business in the 300 block of Pennsylvania avenue S.E. Some five years ago he sold the business and retired.

One Concession to Intemperance

Of remarkable vitality, Mr. Mahoney retained all of his faculties except his hearing, which was slightly impaired, until his death. He often declared he would live to be 100, and when his health began to fail shortly before his death and he was forced to use a cane, he apologized for it to several of his friends.

His one concession to intemperance, he often said, was the use of tobacco. He smoked large, black cigars which, he once told a friend, "would be the death of him."

During the early 1890s the liquor situation in Washington was something of a disgrace, what with improper control of sale and distribution. Mr. Mahoney was one of a group of persons who determined to do something about this. They formed the Anti-Saloon League of the District of Columbia in 1893.

Failed in "Expose."

Having laid the groundwork for a campaign against intemperance, the league next determined on a course of action. Many of the establishments selling liquor, they found, were on property owned by outstanding District citizens. This and other data in the nature of an expose they gathered and asked local newspapers to publish. They were refused.

Undaunted, they pooled their resources and published a paper called No Compromise, which waged a war against intemperance. Then in 1895, the group decided to extend its sphere of influence and called a convention of all organizations interested in temperance. The meeting was held in Mr. Mahoney's home. Shortly afterward the Anti-Saloon League of America came into being. Mr. Mahoney became a figure in the Nation as well as the Capital.

Voted Twice in His Life

Mr. Mahoney had civic pride. Washington, when he was a boy, was a town with one Federal building -- the White House -- and with a population of less than 36,000. He watched with approval the city's growth, taking pleasure in the new Government buildings and the swelling census figures.

He was over 90 when he voted for the second time. He first cast a ballot in 1868 for a Washington mayoral candidate. The second time he went to the polls was in 1938, during the District suffrage referendum. He favored both national representation and local suffrage.

During his later years he liked to think of temperance as a going concern. To his home frequently came men who had come within his sphere of influence in early life. They told him they thought they were better and more successful men because of the things he had drummed into them years before. These incidents he felt to be something of a justification of his efforts.

On the occasion of his birthday three years ago he was given a party by the Association of Oldest Inhabitants at Old Union Engine House.

Doubt as to His Age

There was some doubt as to Mr. Mahoney's exact age. His birth date, recorded in the family Bible, was given as January 10, but the year was confusing. It was written either 1846 or 1847, the last figure being double, with either the 6 superimposed over the 7 or vice versa.

Felicitations at the birth celebration included a telegram from President Roosevelt.

Mr. Mahoney was an advocate of prohibition from the time the Prohibition party was organized in 1869. He was a member of the International Order of Good Templars, once serving as chief templar.

He was twice married. His first wife, Marion Parker Mahoney, died many years ago. The second Mrs. Mahoney, the former Sadie Hissey, died three years ago.

Among those surviving Mr. Mahoney are a daughter, Mrs. Emily R. Pollock of Washington; a granddaughter, Mrs. Edyth Grailey of Baltimore; two grandsons, Robert E. and Charles W. Mahoney; a niece, Mrs. Bertha Davis, and a nephew, William Mahoney, all of this city.

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Funeral Services For John R. Mahoney Set for Tomorrow

Rechabites Will Hold Rites for Temperance Leader Tonight

Funeral services for John R. Mahoney, 94, prominent national and District temperance leader, who died yesterday in Sibley Hospital, will be held at 2 p.m. tomorrow in the Ryan funeral home, 317 Pennsylvania avenue S.E. Burial will be in Congressional Cemetery.

Earlier rites will be held at 8 o'clock tonight in the funeral home by Eagle Tent of the Order of Rechabites, with friends and other organizations of which Mr. Mahoney was a member invited to attend. Mrs. Susie Clarkson, chief ruler of the tent, will be among those officiating.

Honored by Organization

At a meeting last night in the organization hall, 7 Fourth street N.E., Mr. Mahoney's memory was honored by national officers, including High Chief Ruler E.H. Hamilton, High Treasurer William J. Miller and High Chaplain Porter C. Fox.

When 12 years of age Mr. Mahoney came to the District from the Oklahoma Indian Territory. For many years he was in business here, retiring about five years ago from operation of a paper-hanging business in the 300 block of Pennsylvania avenue S.E.

Active in Anti-Saloon Group

In 1893 he and fellow citizens formed the Anti-Saloon League of the District of Columbia, and he is credited with a part in the later establishment of the Anti-Saloon League of America.

His character and career were lauded last night at a meeting of the Association of Oldest Inhabitants, of which he had been financial secretary for 33 years. A committee was named to attend the funeral, including John Clagett Proctor, Christian Heurich, Charles A. Langley, Fred A. Emery, Joseph I. Keefer, John B. Dickman, Elra C. Palmer, Jesse C. Suter, L.E. Brueninger, Walter E. Allen, Anthony Denekas, Dr. Hugh M. Smith, James F. Duhamel, Harry A. Burr and Harry Gladman.

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Oldest Inhabitants Pay Tribute to John R. Mahoney

Financial Secretary of Organization Held Office For 33 Years

The Association of Oldest Inhabitants of the District paused in its regular monthly meeting last night to pay respects to the memory of one of its oldest members, John R. Mahoney, 94, who died yesterday at Sibley Hospital.

Glowing tributes to the former temperance leaders, who served 33 years as financial secretary of the association, were made by numerous members meeting in the old Union Engine House, Nineteenth and H streets N.W.

Citing his "fidelity to our association," Fred A. Emery termed Mr. Mahoney's death as "a distinct loss to the membership." His lie, Mr. Emery added, is "a glowing example to the younger generation for the manner in which he has carried out his high ideals."

John Clagett Proctor, acting president of the association, pointed out the office of financial secretary was "created solely for Mr. Mahoney." He was unanimously elected to the office in 1907 and had held that post until his death, it was recalled.

Officers to Attend Funeral

The group unanimously approved the drawing up of a memorial resolution to be sent to members of the family. All elective officers of the association will attend funeral services tomorrow.