

Standard Form For Members of the Legislature

Name of Representative Bemis, George Washington Senator Bemis,
George Washington - Represented Buchanan County, Iowa

1. Birthday and place 13 Oct 1826 Spencer, Massachusetts

2. Marriage (s) date place

Narcissa T. Royzell 11 Apr 1855

3. Significant events for example:

A. Business _____

B. Civic responsibilities _____

C. Profession Surveyor

4. Church membership _____

5. Sessions served 8th General Assembly 1860 - House of Representatives

6. Public Offices 14th, 15th General Assemblies 1872, 1874 - Senate

A. Local Buchanan County surveyor; board of supervisors

B. State Commissioner of locating the site and responsible for construction the
Buildings for the State Hospital for the Insane built at Independence; elected
Treasurer of Iowa in 1876 - 1880

C. National _____

7. Death 24 Sept 1905 Independence, Iowa; Buried Oakwood Cemetery, Independence,
Iowa

8. Children William S.; Arthur R.; May (died in early
womanhood)

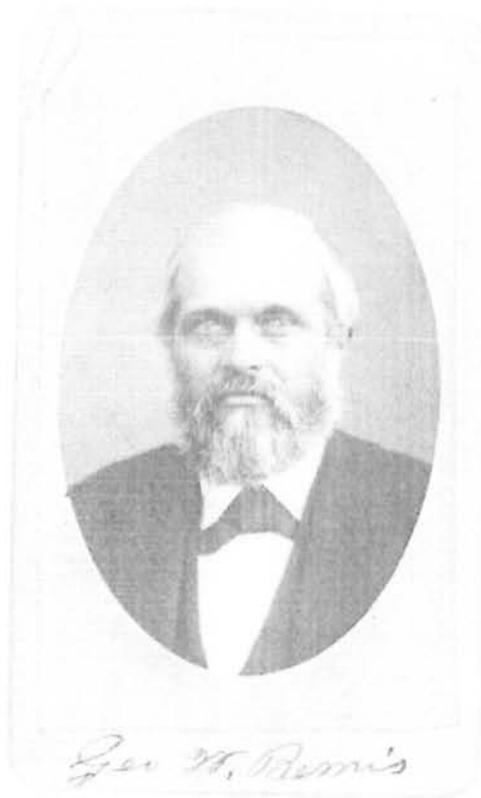
9. Names of parents Eleazer and Susan (Hartwell) Bemis

10. Education Educated in Genesee County, New York schools
supplemented by courses at Cary Collegiate Seminary

11. Degrees _____

12. Other applicable information _____

- In 1837 he moved with his parents to Genesee County, New York
- He taught school and was the town superintendent of schools
- In 1854 he came to Iowa settling at Independence where he spent the remainder of his life.
- After serving in the Legislature he was appointed railroad postal clerk and faithfully served for 7 years on the Illinois Central railroad between Dubuque and Sioux City.
- His wife, Narcissa, died 9 Aug 1899.



STRONG OAK HAS FALLEN

The Passing of the Honorable George W. Bemis After a Long Life That Was Full of Good Works and Noble Deeds for Humanity.

Our well known and highly respected fellow citizen, G. W. Bemis, after a long illness, died at his home in this city on the night of September 21, 1905. He had survived his excellent wife, Narcissa T. Roszell, by several years, and also their daughter May, who was removed by death in her early womanhood. The only surviving children, two sons, William S., a lawyer residing at Spencer, Iowa, and Arthur R., of this city, ministered to his needs and were present at his decease.

Hon. George Washington Bemis was born at Spencer, Mass., on October 13, 1826. Eleven years later he removed with his parents to Genesee county, N. Y. Here he obtained a good rudimentary education, supplemented by a

portant office the state required him to furnish a very large indemnifying bond. He sent the bond here and asked our help in filling its requirements. His old neighbors showed their confidence in his integrity by subscribing heavily towards meeting the large sum named in the bond. He subsequently said it was one of the proudest moments of his life when he saw how generously they had assisted him by such a splendid financial indorsement.

After the close of his second term as state treasurer he retired to private life, bearing an untarnished reputation, built a large, comfortable home, where he has hospitably entertained many friends, and with general good health and congenial friends about him



Photo by Gilbert.

THE LATE GEORGE W. BEMIS.

course at Cary collegiate seminary. He engaged in school teaching and was elected town superintendent of schools at Independence. All the remaining years of his life were spent here, ex-

he has until recently spent a very comfortable old age. In every position to which he was filled the office with intelligence, capability and integrity. These are the

College B

A Special Feature of Our Fall Stock

WE are introducing this: Colt, Kid and the new G. Their low, rakish tops, the new extension sole effects, lining, smart appearance. They edly prove the distinctive hit

Krippendorff's In Queen Quality

We invite you to see the Coll interest in



as sold his residence
 first ward to Thomas
 Liberty township.
 was \$2,650.

t, bookkeeper for the
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 v the past week
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a, who had been vis-
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 number of speakers
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ks and Miss Ethel
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 t, Mrs. Ann McDon-
 o, Thomas Edwards.

orge Griffin and son
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McGeorge, of Wilm-
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E. C. Emmons and
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on, formerly of Inde-
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s, now employed as
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Miller and daughters,
 will leave on Monday
 o., where they will
 for the coming season.
 today with the house-

Source: Iowa Territorial and State Legislators Collection compiled by volunteers and staff at the State Historical Society of Iowa Library, Des Moines, Iowa.

Miller and daughters, will leave on Monday, Oct. 10, where they will for the coming season. Today with the house-

Fergus Falls, Minn., leave this week on a trip to his father-in-law. Mr. Borst reports excellent part of Minnesota in

Burlingham returned from extended visit in Indianapolis, Mich. With the weather Mr. and Mrs. will go to Southern California winter.

left this morning for Mexico, where she will attend agricultural school and study in English. Miss Katrina Morse leaves for her season.

A. B. Chappell and C. Chappell returned from a two-weeks' visit to the West. Their trip extended as far as San Diego. The return trip was via the Pacific.

of Miss Agnes Slaughter and Mrs. Emma Slaughter, nee Cameron was proscribed morning in this city. W. J. Davison. The wedding couple will be

errick and daughter, will leave on Monday for a two-weeks' visit to their city they will go in Mrs. Longcor, to her home, where they will winter.

labor, bookkeeper for the Ice company, leaves for a two months' visit in California. She will be accompanied by Charles Durno, of Chicago, who was a guest here during the summer and who has been recently in the western part of

meir and Will Peasley leave from a trip to Colorado. While in the latter state they purchased a tract of cultivated land. The tract is near Stockton, Rooks county, in that section are in fine condition and double the price of last

standard, best 5 cent cigar.

th
Royal

course at Cary collegiate seminary. He engaged in school teaching and was elected town superintendent of schools.

In 1854 he came to Iowa and settled at Independence. All the remaining years of his life were spent here, except when absent occupying official station.

His first office in Iowa was that of county surveyor of this county. Subsequently he was elected a member of the first board of supervisors of Buchanan county. In the fall of 1859 he was elected to the legislature and served in the house of the Eighth general assembly of Iowa, with entire acceptance to his constituency. After the close of this legislative duty he was appointed as railroad postal clerk and faithfully served as such for the long period of seven years on the Illinois Central between Dubuque and Sioux City.

In 1869 the Twelfth general assembly passed the act providing for a state hospital for the insane at Independence and appointed three commissioners, charged with the duty of locating the site and with the responsibility of the construction of the buildings. In the autumn of the same year the resident commissioner, Albert Clarke, was called away by death. Mr. Bemis was appointed to the place, and served as secretary and treasurer practically during the entire period of construction. The large state appropriations, amounting to nearly a million dollars, passed through his hands, yet so judiciously was the great sum expended, and so honestly was it disbursed, that it has long been a source of local pride, nay, of state pride as well, that no taint of jobbery or corruption has ever smirched the good name of this state institution.

In 1871 Mr. Bemis was elected to the state senate, and served in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth general assemblies. He was not a talkative member, but examined proposed legislation with so much care and gave evidence of such sound judgment that he gained the reputation of an excellent legislator, and his opinion was often considered an authority. An evidence of this high degree of confidence reposed in his judgment is found in the fact that while serving as senator a bill appropriating \$200,000 for this hospital, under his statement was passed by the senate without a dissenting vote.

In 1876 he was elected treasurer of the state of Iowa. He was re-elected in 1878, serving two terms of two years each. Upon qualifying for this im-

he has until recently spent a very comfortable old age.

In every position to which he was called during his long life he uniformly filled the office with intelligence, capability and integrity. These are the great qualifications for the discharge of public trusts; without them, there is no safety, but with these safeguards there is no danger in public office for the American people.

Mr. Bemis descended from a long line of New England ancestors, whose probable virtues seem to be exemplified in his character. Opposed to everything tyrannical, unjust or deleterious to the public welfare, he was in sentiment an abolitionist, an advocate of temperance, a sturdy republican and a believer in woman suffrage.

Providence endowed him with a wonderfully retentive memory. Frequently during recent years we have heard him quote the substance of printed articles published forty-five years ago. This ability to recall and re-state conversations and arguments on public questions made him a very delightful companion during his later years, particularly when referring to anecdotes, reminiscences and speeches of prominent men of the former generation.

He was just a good, plain, honest, reliable, patriotic citizen. There was no prevarication in his character. If he was for you he said so; if against you, one knew it without asking. There are many qualities of his mind and heart and many acts of his long and useful life, which are very worthy of emulation.

His earthly race is run. Sorrowfully we lay our old-time, long-time friend aside with many, many memories.

—W. G. Donnan.

The funeral rites were held at the family home yesterday afternoon at 2:30. Many old-time friends gathered to pay their final token of respect to the deceased. Rev. D. W. Fahn, of the First Presbyterian church, conducted the services and paid a high tribute to the life of the deceased. The pallbearers, both honorary and active, were chosen from among the personal friends of Mr. Bemis. Honorary—Z. Stout, W. G. Donnan, E. Cobb, R. Bartle, D. F. Bisbee, Jed Lake, J. W. Lamb, E. Leach. Active—M. W. Harmon, O. M. Gillett, R. B. Raines, John Barnett, B. W. Tabor, R. D. Backus. The interment was in Oakwood cemetery.

THE OBITUARY RECORD.

Mrs. Johanna Bray

passed away at her home, north of this city, on Friday morning, after an illness extending over several weeks. Her demise was due to her advanced age. She was born in Ireland in 1829, and when a young girl came to America. She lived her early life in Wisconsin, and was married there to John Bray. For many years they were residents of Washington township. Mr. Bray's death occurred in 1896. Ten children were born to them, nine of whom are living and were in attendance upon the final obsequies. They are Mrs. R. D. O'Brien, of this city; Mrs. J. D. Miller, of Masonville; Stephen Bray, of Byron township; and Mrs. Frank and Mrs. George of Chicago; John and George, living on the family homestead. The funeral

good qualities. She was converted at an early age and united with the M. E. church, in which she always lived a consistent Christian. For six years Mrs. Williams suffered from the affliction that finally culminated its unrelenting work in her early death. She had submitted to several painful and critical surgical operations with much heroism. Quiet in her manner, she was still very observant and thoughtful; possessing a mind well informed on all topics of study, and the keenest sympathy with every movement of the church. Her suffering seemed to exalt her spiritual qualities. She loved the church of Christ. She was present whenever practicable in the social meetings, and her testimony was always clear, simple and evidencing a high type of Christian character. She died the gradual but sure approach of dissolution with the utmost composure.



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...IN THE...
Radiant Home
OVER ALL OTHER HE
THE PRACTICALLY
INDESTRUCTIBLE AIR BLAS
PRODUCES THE FOLLOWING
Perfect combustion of Soft Coal, consuming all the Fumes
much more heat than in other stoves is wasted.

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HISTORY OF IOWA

FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES
TO THE BEGINNING OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

FOUR VOLUMES

BY BENJAMIN F. GUE

*Illustrated with Photographic Views of the Natural Scenery of
the State, Public Buildings, Pioneer Life, Etc.*

WITH PORTRAITS AND BIOGRAPHIES OF NOTABLE MEN AND WOMEN OF IOWA

VOLUME IV
IOWA BIOGRAPHY



SEAL OF THE STATE OF IOWA

7864

THE CENTURY HISTORY COMPANY
41 LAFAYETTE PLACE
NEW YORK CITY



GEORGE W. BEMIS

George G. Wright, who was a member of the Senate from Iowa, pronounced his acquittal just and his opinion was heartily indorsed by the people of Iowa who never lost confidence in the gallant officer. General Belknap died at Washington, October 13, 1890, and was buried in the National Cemetery at Arlington. Hugh J., a son of General Belknap, became a member of Congress from Chicago.

GEORGE W. BEMIS was born in Spencer, Massachusetts, on the 13th of October 1826. His father removed with his family to Genesee County, New York, in 1837, where George, who was the only son, remained on his father's farm until the age of twenty-one. He received a good education and taught school for several years. In 1854 he came to Iowa, taking up his residence at Independence, Buchanan County, which became his permanent home. Mr. Bemis served several years as county surveyor. In 1859 he was elected on the Republican ticket to the House of the Eighth General Assembly, serving through the regular and extra sessions. He was for seven years in the postal service. In 1871 he was elected to the State Senate, serving four years. He was for many years Commissioner of the Hospital for the Insane at Independence of which he was treasurer. In 1876 he was elected State Treasurer on the Republican ticket and at the expiration of the term was reelected, serving four years. The State has never had a more competent and faithful public official than George W. Bemis.

NARCISSA T. BEMIS was born in Alabama, Genesee County, New York, May 8, 1829. She came to Iowa and on the 11th of April, 1855, married George W. Bemis, who became a prominent public official of the State. Their home was at Independence, in Buchanan County. During the Civil War Mrs. Bemis was one of the most efficient and devoted workers on the Sanitary Commission and untiring in her labor to aid the soldiers in camp, hospital and field. She was an active worker in the Children's Aid Society, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and many other good works. Mrs. Bemis was especially interested in the Political Equality Club and was a life-long worker for the enfranchisement of women, giving her time, work and means liberally for the advancement of this cause before the State Legislatures. She was a valued worker in the Iowa Unitarian Association. She died on the 9th of August, 1899.

THOMAS H. BENTON, JR., was a nephew of the great Missouri statesman whose name he bore. He was born in Williamson County, Tennessee, on the 5th of September, 1816. His education was acquired at Huntington Academy and he graduated from Marion College, Missouri. In 1839 he located at Dubuque, Iowa, where he taught school and afterwards became a merchant. In 1846 he was elected to the Senate of the

THE UNITED STATES
BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY
AND
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OF
EMINENT AND SELF-MADE MEN.

IOWA VOLUME.

CHICAGO AND NEW YORK:
AMERICAN BIOGRAPHICAL PUBLISHING COMPANY.
1878.

the county has failed to receive the hearty support of Mr. Cooley. As early as 1856 he was one of the prominent men in organizing a railroad company called the Northwestern, of which he was made the attorney. The financial depression delayed this enterprise, but after repeated trials the road, under another name, reached Decorah in September, 1869. Upon the celebration of its completion Mr. Cooley was very appropriately made the orator for the occasion. Two years after he settled in Decorah an effort was made to remove the county seat to Freeport, three miles eastward, and but for the adroit efforts of Mr. Cooley and a few other persons the project would probably have succeeded.

Mr. Cooley came to Decorah to practice law and to make it his business for life. He has carried out his intentions almost to the letter, and has attained eminence in his profession. The few offices which he has held were urged upon him by the partiality of friends. In the spring of 1855 he was elected prosecuting attorney for the county, serving two years. When, in 1857, Decorah was incorporated he was chosen president of its board of trustees; and in October of the same year he was elected to the lower branch of the general assembly, the seventh, which was the first under the new constitution. Young as he was, and wholly inexperienced in legislative matters, he was placed at the head of the committee on federal relations. He was also on other important committees, such as the judiciary and township and county organizations, doing valuable work on all of them, as well as on several select committees.

In 1861 Mr. Cooley was appointed postmaster of Decorah, but resigned at the end of two years. In September, 1864, President Lincoln appointed him commissary of subsistence in the volunteer service, with the rank of captain of cavalry. He held this position until October, 1865, when he was breveted major for meritorious services, and received his discharge the following month.

Twice his republican friends in Winneshiek county have presented his name before district conventions for congressional nomination, but in both instances competing candidates bore off the palm, and he magnanimously took the stump and aided in their election.

Mr. Cooley has profound respect for the bible; is familiar with its teachings, and has aimed to live a blameless life. He has no church connection.

On the 18th of March, 1856, he was united in marriage with Miss Jane M. Rhodes, of Dubuque, a lady of very fine talent as an amateur artist in oil colors. They have two sons, both students in the literary department of Michigan University. Both, it is understood, have the law profession in view.

Mr. Cooley, like his sons, is a student,—such, at least, he regards himself. He loves the practice of law much better than politics, and still pursues its study with the relish and eagerness of youthful manhood. Though standing high at the bar, he has a loftier altitude simply as an attorney, to which he honorably aspires. Office has lost its charms for him, if it ever had any. Through his success at the bar he has obtained a competency, and has one of the most elegant and costly residences in Decorah.

HON. GEORGE W. BEMIS,

INDEPENDENCE.

GEORGE WASHINGTON BEMIS, a native of Massachusetts, was born in Spencer, Worcester county, on the 13th of October, 1826, and is the son of Eleazer and Susan (Hartwell) Bemis. His great-grandfather, Edmund Bemis, commanded a company in the expedition against Crown Point, in 1755-56. His father moved with his family to Alabama, Genesee county, New York, in 1837, and there resumed his occupation of farming; George, an only son, remaining at home until he was of age. After closing his studies in the common school, he attended about four terms at the Carysville Collegiate

Seminary, in Oakfield, near Alabama. He afterward taught school in the latter town and in Wisconsin four winters, employing the summers of that time on the farm.

In 1854 he removed to Independence, Iowa, where he has since resided. The first three or four years after his arrival he devoted mainly to surveying and to real-estate operations, and during most of the time for seventeen years he has acted in some capacity, either as a county, legislative or government officer.

The year after settling in Independence he was appointed surveyor of Buchanan county, and served

in that capacity for two years. He was a member of the eighth general assembly in 1859-60, and of the extra war session of 1861. He acted in the capacity of postal clerk on the Dubuque and Sioux City railroad about seven years, and from 1871 to 1875 was a member of the state senate. He was a commissioner, and secretary and treasurer of the commissioners, of the Hospital for the Insane, at Independence, when elected senator, and resigned to fill the latter office. In April, 1872, he was reappointed a commissioner, and at present (1877) holds that position. Being the only resident commissioner, his responsibilities are very great, but he has never failed to discharge them with the utmost fidelity. In the summer of 1876 he was nominated on the

republican ticket for treasurer of state. He has always voted with that party.

In every position which Mr. Bemis has occupied he has discharged his duties faithfully and satisfactorily. As a legislator, he was a constant worker and wise counselor. He was chairman of more than one important committee, and at the close of every session stood higher in the esteem of the people, whose confidence in him is shown in their placing the treasury of the state in his hands. Every nomination which he has received has been unsought.

On the 11th of April, 1855, he was married to Miss Narcissa T. Roszell, of Independence, a lady of fine accomplishments and of most excellent family. They have three children.

GENERAL DAVID B. HILLIS, M.D.,

KEOKUK.

GENERAL DAVID BURK HILLIS, second colonel 17th Iowa Infantry, is a native of Jefferson county, Indiana, and was born on the 24th of July, 1825. He is a son of David Hillis, who was quite a distinguished whig politician, and at one time lieutenant-governor of Indiana. His ancestors were from the north of Ireland, and of the Protestant faith. His grandfather Hillis was a soldier in the revolutionary war.

General Hillis was educated at the University of South Hanover, Indiana, and studied medicine at Madison, Indiana, with the then distinguished Dr. William Davidson, a graduate of Edinburgh, Scotland. He graduated at St. Louis, Missouri, and at the age of twenty-one commenced the practice of his profession in Jackson county, Indiana. For eleven years he gave to his profession his undivided attention, and at the end of that time had attained a high standing among the members of his fraternity. In 1858 he abandoned his profession to engage in mercantile pursuits. Moving west, he located in Bloomfield, Davis county, Iowa, where he continued in business till the summer of 1860, when he removed to Keokuk, Iowa, and there, in partnership with his brother-in-law, Oscar Kiser, established himself in the dry-goods trade. In August, 1861, he was appointed an aid-de-camp to Governor Kirkwood. This position he held till the 14th of March, 1862, when he was commissioned lieutenant-colonel of the 17th Infantry. Hon. John W. Rankin, a

distinguished lawyer, was the colonel. In August, 1862, Colonel Rankin tendered his resignation, and on its acceptance Lieutenant-Colonel Hillis was promoted to the colonelcy of his regiment. Having, with his regiment, been engaged in many skirmishes and severely contested battles under General Grant, in the campaign against Vicksburg, through central Mississippi, the Yazoo Pass, and afterward down the Mississippi river to the "flanking" of Vicksburg, and having particularly distinguished himself at the battles of Champion's Hill, Jackson, and the siege of Vicksburg, he was at last, by reason of business requirements, impelled to resign, leaving the service with much credit, carrying with him the love and regrets of his men, and for his gallantry a brevet-brigadier-general's commission, and an expensive and handsome sword, suitably inscribed, a testimonial from the officers of his regiment, with whom he had participated in so many pleasures and dangers.

In June, 1863, General M. M. Crocker, writing to President Lincoln, says: "I had the honor to command Colonel Hillis in the late campaign of General Grant in Mississippi, from Port Gibson until after the battle of Champion Hills. In the march and on the battle field he exhibited all the highest qualities of a soldier, and an unusual capacity for command. At Jackson his regiment held the position most exposed, and with undaunted courage drove everything before them. At Champion Hills, where the fight was most desperate and the situation of