

Alvospeltin Willson

Standard Form For Members of the Legislature

Name of Representative Willson, Walter Gordon Senator _____

Representatives Boone, Webster, Stacy, Haskins, Greene, Franklin, Wright
and Humboldt counties.

1. Birthday and place 28 December 1824 Arboursight, New York

2. Marriage (s) date place

Calista Louise Rickard 27 Feb 1848 Polk Co. Wisconsin

3. Significant events for example:

- A. Business He was the founder of Webster City, Iowa; he organized the Webster City Branch Bank Railroad that purchased large tracts of land and laid out the town of Lehigh, Iowa
- B. Civic responsibilities _____

C. Profession General merchandising, milling and lumbering; speculator

4. Church membership _____

5. Sessions served 6th General Assembly 1856

6. Public Offices

A. Local Mayor of Webster City, Iowa

B. State _____

C. National _____

7. Death 16 Aug 1900 Webster City, Iowa = Graceland Cemetery, Webster City, Hamilton County, Iowa

8. Children Frank E.; three additional sons died in infancy

9. Names of parents Zabina and Polly (Smith) Willson

10. Education

11. Degrees

12. Other applicable information

- At age 19 he and his father left New York arriving in Milwaukee on 8 Oct. 1840 locating at Palmyra where his brother lived.
- In spring 1855 the brother came to Webster City, Iowa where they invested in land and established the first sawmill in Hamilton County. They were known as W. C. and S. Wilson. Their business lasted 36 years.
- They platted the town of New Castle, Iowa which was later named Webster City.
- The brothers erected a large steam flouring mill which was patronized by Sioux City, Fort Dodge, Algona and the greater part of northwestern Iowa.
- They were also able to secure stage routes which brought increased mail facilities and all the public utilities demanded by a growing pioneer settlement.
- In 1861 he moved to Chicago in the commission business. He returned 6 years later and engaged in building railroads and in advancing Webster City.
- He died from effects of a railroad accident.

Sources Log For Legislation Entries

Applicability

- | Source | Non Applicable | Applicable | Information obtained |
|--|----------------|------------|----------------------|
| - <u>The Biographical Record and Portrait Album of Hamilton and Wright Counties, Iowa 1889, p. 376-383</u> | | | |
| - <u>Obituary - The Daily Tribune, Waterloo City, Iowa, Fri. Aug 17, 1900, p. 1, col. 2, 3; Fri. Aug. 24, 1900, p. 4, col. 3, p. 4, col. 4 and p. 4 col. 1</u> | | | |
| - <u>ancestry.com (accessed 7/31 and 8/2/2009)</u> | | | |
| - <u>findagrave.com (accessed 28 Feb 2009)</u> | | | |



W. C. Willson



Mrs. W. C. Willson

New Bank.

nd two sons will open this city on the first of t. It will be named the nk. Wm. Wilke will be H. F. Wilke, vice-presi- hn A. Wilke, cashier. general banking, col- tate and loan business. occupy the northwest ilke building on Seneca stitution will be capital-). Success to the new

er Gardiner.

Gardiner, of the Story and Miss Sadie Hazen, st popular and efficient own schools, were mar- y evening, Aug. 15, at the n Stratford, Rev. F. A. ng. These two worthy are too widely and fav- not only as instructors, rious walks of life, to ntroduction. They have ghed in the balance and ll done. The Freeman- uly add its benediction.

ned to Remember.

a, the Persian, visited stitute Monday and was participant in the physi- On one point he differed essor, who finally dis- estion by saying, "you Th ersian betook him- el, got his text book, and ie school house, triumph- ted his position. Com- e fact in the evening he did I learn that for? To ues not. I learned that t" He is a student in

WALTER C. WILLSON DEAD!

Webster City's Best Known Pioneer Citizen Passes Away.

His Death the Result of an Accident.

About nine o'clock last night this community was shocked by the announcement that "Walter C. Willson is dead." It was quite generally known that he had been hurt on the railroad at 5:30 in the afternoon, but it was not believed that his injuries were serious until an hour before he passed away. He was to all appearances conscious when brought home, and told those around him that he did not think he was seriously hurt. An examination by the attending physician, Dr. A. M. Pond, revealed no outward evidences of injury, there being no cuts or visible bruises on the body, but the presence of blood on his under garments indicated possible serious internal injury; and so it proved. The particulars of the accident that proved fatal to Mr. Willson, were about as follows: It had been the habit of the train returning from Lehigh in the afternoon for some time past to bring back a load of slack with which to level up the railroad yards in this city. For this purpose a dump car, which emptied its load both ways from the center, was attached to the train. Mr. Willson was on this car directing the operations of the workmen when the accident happened. The one side had been dumped, and while the men were on the other side of the car it in some way became loosened from its fastening and fell to the outside of the track, carrying Mr. Willson with it and pinioning him securely to the ground, where he was held some ten help could be called, by the long con-

point near Webster City to Storm Lake, a distance of eighty miles. Mr. Willson was a passenger on the first engine that crossed the bridge at Du- buque, and on the new line from Web- ster City to the then western terminal his was the hand that controlled the whistle that awakened the pioneers to the dawning of a new era. In 1869 the original Willson house was erected and operated by W. C. and S. Willson. It was a commodious and modern structure, costing about \$15,000. Sumler Willson as landlord gave the house his personal attention, also hav- ing charge of the store while W. C. at- tended the flouring mill and superin- tended the landed interests of the firm. Up to that time the Willsons had built a large per cent of the business struc- tures and residences of the town, al- ways taking the most lively interest in any enterprise that promised to en- hance the general welfare, or build up the place. The co-partnership of the Willson brothers existed until the win- ter of 1882, when the bond was broken by the untimely death of Sumler, who was thrown from his horse and so seriously injured that he died three weeks later. In the fall of 1876 the Web- ster City and Crooked Creek Railroad and Coal Company was organized, with W. C. Willson as president and general manager, which positions he held un- til the day of his death.

Mr. Willson, although a man of un- bounded energy and invincible will, possessed a kind heart and generous na- ture, and was never more happy than when contributing to the pleasure of those around him. In the family home he was always sunny and benig- nant, and those who are bereft of hus- band and father in his death will ever have present in memory the assurance of that steadfast love and affection that marked his domestic life. Per- haps no man in all northern Iowa pos- sessed a greater measure of industry and persistency in the pursuit of busi- ness affairs than the subject of this sketch, and certainly no man in Hamilton county has left the im- press of his life's work more indeli- bly upon the community of which he was so prominent a factor for more

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On one point he differed professor, who finally dis- question by saying, "you" The Persian betook him- hotel, got his text book, and e school house, triumph- icated his position. Com- the fact in the evening he at did I learn that for? To I gues not. I learned that er it." He is a student in edical college, Minneapo-

The Manila Times.

hands us a copy of the Ma- of the date of June 20, sent him by his son Fred, in the Philippines, serving Reg. of U. S. volunteers. is an eight page, seven col- and the subscription price ars a month or twenty dol-

It is well filled with ad- ts, but the mechanical feat- paper is poor and the local e is inferior. The propri- idently not in the news- es for their health, as a free e all manner of adver- a Sunday horse races to the ar chips.

Jointed Kitten Story.

w told the editor of the is story last week in refer- pendingsenatorial appoint- en he, the governor, was a s deputed to take away and ter of kittens, which unin- come to the home. It was that if the children could re of the kittens it should a pet. This was a hard job. d the black one, one the id soon. So, to settle the : governor had to drown the and went to a neighbor's ew kitten for the children, h they were all satisfied. ns may read and Interpret e.—Rockford Register.

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Will be Permanent.

holders of the Webster City

operations of the workmen when the accident happened. The one side had been dumped, and while the men were on the other side of the car it in some way became loosened from its fasten- ing and fell to the outside of the track, carrying Mr. Willson with it and pinioning him securely to the ground, where he was held one ten or fifteen minutes—or until sufficient help could be called, by the long con- tinued whistling of the engine, to ex- tricate him. The accident occurred about half a mile west of the C. C. depot, from which point Mr. Willson was able to ride to his home in a buggy.

Walter C. Willson was born in the state of New York in 1824, and at the age of eighteen emigrated to Wiscon- sin, locating at Palmyra, at which place he and the widow who survives him (nee Calista Louisa Rickerson) were married July 27, 1848. To them four sons were born, all of whom died in infancy except Frank E., who has for several years been associated with his father in his extensive business affairs, and upon whom the conduct of the business in the future will depend. It was in the town of Palmyra that the firm of W. C. and S. Willson had

its birth, and which lasted uninter- ruptedly for thirty-six years. They were engaged in general merchandis- ing, milling and lumbering. In the spring of 1855 the brothers came to Webster City, bringing with them a cash capital of \$22,000. They invested in land and established the first saw- mill in Hamilton county. The same year they platted the town of New Castle, which was located mostly east of what is now Seneca street, and which was subsequently, through the efforts of W. C. Willson, who was a member of the state legislature, named Webster City. In 1857 the Willson brothers erected a large steam flour- ing mill at a cost of \$15,000, with a ca- pacity of two hundred barrels of flour per day. At this early day this mill was patronized by Sioux City, Fort Dodge, Algona and the greater part of northwestern Iowa. All the machin- ery for this mill was hauled overland from the Mississippi river and Iowa City. The Willsons were also active in securing stage routes, inces

of that steadfast love and affection that marked his domestic life. Per- haps no man in all northern Iowa pos- sessed a greater measure of industry and persistency in the pursuit of busi- ness affairs than the subject of this sketch, and certainly no man in Hamilton county has left the im- press of his life's work more indeli- bly upon the community of which he was so prominent a factor for more than forty years, than has Walter C. Willson. In their affliction the sur- viving relatives will have the sincere sympathy and condolence of all our people, to whom his sudden death comes as a genuine sorrow.

The funeral service will be held at the family home, on First street, on Sunday afternoon at 3 o'clock. The services will be conducted by Rev. B. P. Snook. The remains may be viewed by friends from 10 a. m. to 2:30 p. m.

The Newspaper Trust.

Possibly the most comical announce- ment of the year has been thus made by the Creston Advertiser: "In a let- ter received from Mr. J. C. Welliver, the able and versatile editor of the Sioux City Tribune, it is learned that he is collecting statistics as to the re- sults of trusts on individual effort and enterprise of a manufacturing nature, which were starting up in Iowa." When Mr. Welliver became one of the proprietors of the Sioux City Tribune he also became a member of "the pat- ent inside trust" which supplies print- ed sheets to the newspapers.—Register.

Of all the tyrannical trusts in exist- ence, save alone the silver trust, the newspaper patent trust is the worst. It is organized for the purpose of forc- ing publishers to continue patronizing one house, no matter if the service is unsatisfactory. No effort has been made to agree on prices, but under the methods employed each house can squeeze its patrons to the limit. They have agreed that one house shall not interfere with the business of any other house. Therefore, a publisher who buys his ready prints of the Sioux City house cannot get them else- where at any price. The only remedy publishers have is to resort to all home print, and many of them are making

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Will be Permanent.

holders of the Webster City
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re that they have decided
a permanent organization.
will be maintained as a
ports and gatherings of all
how has been booked for a
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is a first-class company and
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in September. It will be
the managers to have a good
of some kind at regular in-
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or company it will make
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in securing stage routes, increased
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ities demanded by a growing pioneer
settlement. In the winter of 1856-7
when W. C. Willson was in the legisla-
ture, the county of Hamilton was
formed and Webster City made the
county seat. In the fall of 1861 W. C.
Willson removed to Chicago, embark-
ing in the commission business as a
member of the firm of Rand, Willson
& Co. Six years later he returned to
Webster City, since which time he had
been actively engaged in railroad
building and operating; in promoting
the general advancement of the
country and the up-building of Web-
ster City. In furthering the construc-
tion of the old Dubuque and Pacific
railroad, now the Illinois Central, Mr.
Willson devoted his great energies for
a year, having taken a contract to put
down the ties and lay the iron from a

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preparations to do that.

Track and Train.

The Illinois Central has provided for
six new engines of the latest pattern
and the most powerful build which
will be used in the passenger service
of the road between Council Bluffs and
Chicago. Recently the passenger de-
partment has been experimenting
with fast runs on the new line be-
tween Fort Dodge and Council Bluffs,
and the fact has been demonstrated
that the line will not permit of fast
running with perfect safety. The
present schedule for the passenger
trains from Chicago to Council Bluffs
is fifteen hours, but during the past
week the trains of the road have made
several trips in which one and one-
half hours have been cut from this
time. The probability is that a four-
teen hour service will be put on soon.

ne Bunch of Cattle.

Carson returned Saturday Southern Kansas where he head of fine feeding one will sell to the farm- section. 500 head of them e face breed and the bal- average about half white v are said to be the finest ped to this section. The 50 head are now here, the be shipped between now . Col. Carson will sell in purchaser and at reason-

Duncombe Business Man.

dy, a prominent business ombe, died Sunday after- Lundy was about thirty His father owned a gen- nd he was interested in s also. Mr. Lundy had ome time with a compli- iseases. It was thought as growing better and t belief was ill founded. to the Webster City car- days previous, and had riends in his usual cheer- . His fatal illness was sicians were sent for from and everything possible o save him, but his life in spite of all efforts.

cial G. A. R. Car.

A. R. car, will leave at 10:42 p. m., Aug. 26, C. & N. W. Ry., for the campment of the G. A. R. The committee reports in the first special car and we will order the roviding we receive suffi- of names within the next days to fill same. In or- is car we must notify the pany at once. The ad- e special cars are that it owed and you are sure ble chair. Persons wish us in this car will please mes at the earliest con- ny of Iowa Territorial and State Legi- James Kephart and A. A. ttee,

THE FUNERAL OF WALTER C. WILLSON.

3,000 People Attend the Last Sad Rites of Hamilton County's Most Distinguished Pioneer Citizen.

The funeral of Hon. Walter C. Willson Sunday was the largest gathering of the kind in the history of the town. The obsequies of Judge D. D. Chase nine years ago brought together more people than had previously met here on a similiar occasion. But at this date the last sad rites over the remains of Mr. Willson marks the largest attendance at a public funeral ever witnessed in our midst. Fully a hundred workmen and miners from Lehigh and vicinity, (who acted as a guard of honor) were in the procession, and large numbers were present from other neighboring towns and from all portions of Hamilton county. The services at the home of the deceased, conducted by the Rev. B. F. Snook, were highly fitting and impressive, while the floral offerings were most profuse and beautiful and of the rarest collection. Hon. John F. Duncombe's remarks at the open grave were touching and deeply sympathetic, and brought tears to the eyes of many listeners. He told of the close personal friendship and business relations that had existed between Mr. Willson and himself for more than forty-five years—from the time when they both came to this almost trackless new country as young men in quest of homes and fortunes. How that during all these years they had wrought together in the confidence of brothers, and that no single act of his eventful and busy life had ever betrayed the slightest suspicion of dishonor or want of rectitude on the part of Walter C. Willson. My love for him amounted to affection, and in his death I feel an absolute personal loss. Mr. Duncombe paid a devotion of Mr. Willson to the town and community in which he

Ball Tournament Suggested.

Lovers of the national game are considering the advisability of holding a baseball tournament here, commencing about September 20 and continuing one week. If the project be carried out such teams as the Algona, Manson, Des Moines, Odebolt, Albert Lea and Webster City will take part. Such a tournament would furnish lots of amusement and we believe enough interest could be aroused to make it pay the clubs that take part.

Death of Laura Lee.

After suffering for several months from consumption, Miss Laura May Lee, daughter of Mrs. F. Q. Lee, passed away at the family home on West Bank street Friday afternoon. Miss Lee was never of a very robust constitution, but her condition did not become alarming until last January, when she was taken with hemorrhage of the lungs. Since then she has at times been very low and although her death was not unexpected it brings great gloom and sorrow to the household.

Laura May Lee was born in this city September 25, 1883, in the same house in which her life ended. In 1893 she went with the balance of the family to Hammond, La., where Mr. Lee died. Mrs. Lee and the children returned to this city three years ago. Laura was a member of the Christian church. She possessed a pure and gentle spirit, and was ever mindful of the needs and wishes of others before considering her own. She was a Christian girl in every sense of the word, and her death will bring sorrow to many hearts. The funeral was held from the family home on Bank street Sunday morning at 10 o'clock, conducted by Rev. Kneedy.

The Weather and the Crops.

FOR WEEK ENDING AUG. 20.

The past week was unusually hot and wet. The daily excess in temperature ranged from 3 to 6 degrees. From the 12th to 17th inclusive it was showery in nearly all parts of the state, and excessive amounts of

the first special car and we will order the dividing we receive sufficient names within the next days to fill same. In order we must notify the an, at once. The ad special cars are that it wded and you are sure le chair. Persons wish us in this car will please es at the earliest cony of the undersigned: J. nes Kephart and A. A. ee.

Encampment.

committee of the Na. Encampment at Chined a new feature in ving re-unions by states. extract is from a head-ar: ture has been planned week in reference to s by states at the fixed esday, which is parade here were twenty-five rr ed volunteers in ere will be twenty-five t many halls and build- at that day and hour. mind that when each ssemblies are called to ill be only those who particular state. For idiana assembly will be ent Armory, and mark- ll the regiments of the ades will meet at their d greet old army chums e hundreds of instances ogether soldiers of the t who have not met ter out and could not here by the most com- f registration formerly y made successful by grades will understand his successful they must y one go to their own pr ptly at that hour, nce above cited about apply to all the other

almost trackless new country as young men in quest of homes and fortunes. How that during all these years they had wrought together in the confidence of brothers, and that no single act of his eventful and busy life had ever betrayed the slightest suspicion of dishonor or want of rectitude on the part of Walter C. Willson. My love for him amounted to affection, and in his death I feel an absolute personal loss. Mr. Duncombe paid a high tribute to the tireless energy and devotion of Mr. Willson to the town and community in which he lived these passing years, and recounted his successful efforts in dividing Webster county and organizing Hamilton, and in securing the county seat to Webster City. He spoke of the great public spirit and unbounded energy with which he pursued every enterprise he undertook, and expressed no wonder at the respect and high esteem in which he is held by the people of Webster City and Hamilton county, and at the honorable place he achieved among the pioneer settlers of Iowa. Mr. Duncombe was much affected during his brief remarks. His tribute came from the heart and deeply impressed all within the sound of his voice.

Among those present from a distance were C. T. and J. Q. Burnham, and A. H. Hamilton, of Milwaukee, all members of the Crooked Creek railroad and coal company, of which Mr. Willson was president and general manager.

The relatives present from abroad were:

Mrs. D. A. Reed, only sister and surviving member of the family, and her daughter Miss Addow Reed, of White-water, Wis. Archie Willson, nephew, of Palmyra, Wis. Mary Sherman, niece, of Independence, Iowa.

The pall-bearers were Frank R. Mason, Geo. W. Crosley, J. M. Jones Frank G. Stearns, Percival Knowles and J. D. Hunter—each of whom has lived in Webster City from thirty-three to forty-five years.

At a special session of the city council the following resolutions, which were read by Rev. Snook, were passed by a unanimous vote:

Whereas in the providence of

will bring sorrow to many hearts. The funeral was held from the family home on Bank street Sunday morning at 10 o'clock, conducted by Rev. Kneedy.

The Weather and the Crops.

FOR WEEK ENDING AUG. 20.

The past week was unusually hot and wet. The daily excess in temperature ranged from 3 to 6 degrees. From the 12th to 17th inclusive it was showery in nearly all parts of the state, and excessive amounts of rainfall are reported from numerous stations in the central and southern sections. In many localities the showers were accompanied by severe squalls, causing some damage to windmills, light buildings, stacks of grain, etc.; and heavy corn suffered some injury by being tangled and lodged. But the damage has been light in comparison with the vast amount of benefit resulting from the abundant moisture.

Threshing has been delayed, but a good beginning has been made in fall plowing, with soil in excellent condition; and this is likely to result in an increased acreage of winter wheat in the southern section.

The apple crop has suffered heavily from effects of windstorms, especially in sections where commercial orchards are most extensive.

Abundant fall pasturage is now well assured. The meadows will produce a liberal cutting of aftermath, and there is a good outlook for a fine crop of clover seed. Potatoes are doing well. The corn crop still promises more than an average output for the state. A protracted spell of dry weather is now needed to mature the crop in its best condition.

A Bit of Early History.

In speaking of the death of Hon. W. C. Willson, the Fort Dodge Chronicle recalls a bit of early history in which Mr. Willson was the central figure:

"The organization of the counties of Hamilton and of Webster as they now stand was engineered by Mr. Duncombe and Mr. Willson. It was in 1856, and what was then Webster city, the lower half of Humboldt county,

our take saw



ncil Proceedings. ncil members present.

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 it who have not met
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 apply to all the other

Council Proceedings.

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 all members present.
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AS ALLOWED.

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.....	32.00
&.....	4.80
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une Pub. Co.....	8.00
o.....	7.80

iving member of the family, and her
 daughter Miss Addow Reed, of White-
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 of Palmyra, Wis. Mary Sherman,
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RESPECT AND CONDOLENCE.

Whereas, in the providence of
 Almighty God, our distinguished pio-
 neer citizen and fellow-townsmen,
 Hon. Walter C. Willson, has been re-
 moved from the scenes of earth,
 therefore,

Resolved, by the City Council, of
 Webster City, Iowa, in special session
 assembled, that in the sudden death
 of ex-Mayor Willson, we recognize the
 loss of a valued citizen and a true
 friend of the material interests of the
 city. That for nearly half a century
 he has devoted his best energies and
 great industry to the upbuilding of
 Webster City and the surrounding
 country, and the people owe much to
 his indomitable energy for the city's
 past growth and present prosperity.
 That while many of us differed with
 him in plans or methods adopted or to
 be adopted, we must all recognize the
 fact that during all the years of the
 city's existence his best thoughts and
 energies have been devoted to its
 growth and improvement. That in his
 death the common people of the com-
 munity have lost a true and generous
 friend. He was always ready to aid
 the needy and give encouragement to
 the unfortunate.

That in commemoration of his past
 services for the welfare and general
 good of the city and county, the City
 Council will attend in a body the final
 services to be held over his remains,
 and we hereby invite all past officers
 of the city to unite with us in this
 observance as an expression of our
 grief and sorrow at his sudden de-
 mise.

That we extend our heart-felt sym-
 pathy and condolence to the family
 and relatives of the deceased.

That a copy of these resolutions be
 presented to the family; that they be
 spread upon the records of the city
 and furnished the city papers for pub-
 lication.

an average output for the state. A
 protracted spell of dry weather is now
 needed to mature the crop in its best
 condition.

A Bit of Early History.

In speaking of the death of Hon. W.
 C. Willson, the Fort Dodge Chronicle
 recalls a bit of early history in which
 Mr. Willson was the central figure:

"The organization of the counties of
 Hamilton and of Webster as they now
 stand was engineered by Mr. Duu-
 combe and Mr. Willson. It was in
 1856, and what was then Webster
 county consisted of the present coun-
 ty, the lower half of Humboldt county,
 the upper half being annexed to Kos-
 suth and the whole of what is now
 Hamilton county. The county seat
 had only a short time previous been
 removed from Homer to Fort Dodge,
 only after a long and bitter fight and
 much hard feeling.

It was the pet idea of Mr. Willson to
 have a separate county organized out
 of the eastern half of Webster, and to
 this end a bill was introduced in the
 senate by him. The county of Hamil-
 ton was created and the county seat,
 Webster City, chosen, on the very spot
 where the first log cabin of white men
 stood, built and lived in by Walter
 and Sumler Willson. A good portion
 of the Humboldt grab was relin-
 quished, Kossuth giving up her por-
 tion, but the lower tier of townships
 was retained by Webster. This
 brought on almost endless litigation,
 in which the legal giants of the time
 took part. The matter was finally
 carried to the supreme court, Hum-
 boldt's case being handled by Judge
 Chester C. Cole and John A. Kusson,
 and Webster's side by John F. Dun-
 combe. Oral arguments were made.
 Feeling ran high and the attention of
 the state was centered on the conten-
 tion. The special act of the legisla-
 ture determining that the northern
 tier of townships in Webster county
 should go to Humboldt was declared
 unconstitutional, and the final at-
 tempt of Humboldt county to regain
 the goodly acreage alleged to have
 been withheld from her, quieted."

BIOGRAPHICAL RECORD

AND

PORTRAIT ALBUM

Historical Department of Iowa
OF

4
HAMILTON AND WRIGHT COUNTIES, IOWA.

3178a

CONTAINING PORTRAITS OF ALL THE PRESIDENTS OF THE UNITED STATES FROM WASHINGTON TO CLEVELAND, WITH ACCOMPANYING BIOGRAPHIES OF EACH; PORTRAITS AND BIOGRAPHIES OF THE GOVERNORS OF THE STATE; ENGRAVINGS OF PROMINENT CITIZENS IN HAMILTON AND WRIGHT COUNTIES, WITH PERSONAL HISTORIES OF MANY OF THE EARLY SETTLERS AND LEADING FAMILIES.

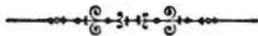
*Presented to the Historical
Department of Iowa by
A. K. Curran*

LEWIS BIOGRAPHICAL PUBLISHING CO.,

113 ADAMS STREET, CHICAGO.

1889.

year or two. Then moved to Vermillion County, Illinois, and thence in 1849 to Appanoose County, Iowa, coming thence in 1852 to Hamilton County. At that time there was not a house on the present site of Webster City, and only six families in the county. He located on section 33, Boone Township, about a mile east of the postoffice. He entered 320 acres of Government land, which he improved and made his home until 1868, when he went to Jefferson County, Kansas, where his wife died in February, 1885, and where he now lives. Mr. and Mrs. Lyon had a family of nine children, five of whom are living—John and Jotham, of this county; Richard, of Washington Territory; Mary Ann, of Jefferson County, Kansas, and George, of Hamilton County. The deceased are Martha, wife of Jesse Bishop; Jane, wife of A. Moffatt; Huldah, second wife of Jesse Bishop, and Sarah wife of Thomas Hopewell. In politics Mr. Lyon is a Republican. He is a member of the Methodist Episcopal church.



HON. WALTER C. AND SUMLER WILLSON.—In sketching the career of a useful and eventful life we find no easy task. Unlike the man who has slipped noiselessly through life's warfare and is distinguished alone in some one particular role, is the individual whose influence has touched every branch of trade that comes in the march and progress of almost fifty years, of whom too much can not be said. As the founder of Webster City and the subject of our sketch we introduce to our readers the Hon. Walter C. Willson. At the age of nineteen he, in company with his father, left his native land in pursuit of employment, arriving at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, at one o'clock P. M.

October 8, 1844, possessed of but one suit of clothes which he wore, and \$3 in cash; this same day he made a trip on foot of sixteen miles, through dense and pathless woods, when he put up for the night, paying for his entertainment \$1.50, thus reducing his bank account one-half. The following day he completed his journey, a distance of forty-five miles, landing at his brother's house. His father followed a few days later, remaining here a short time, when he returned to his home in York State. On the eve of his departure, however, he called his son aside and said: "Walter, how much money have you?" Walter thought the question leading, and gave an evasive answer, coupling with it the remark, that perhaps he could give the information his father desired upon making an invoice of his pants. The investigation was made on the sly, disclosing the fact that *fifty cents* was his balance, but the collapsed condition of the young man's purse was kept safely enough from the father's knowledge. The father feared his son's finances were at low ebb, and insisted on his accepting assistance to aid him through the winter. This offer was too much for the boy's pride, and although penniless and in a strange land, he declined it with a haughty air. Pluck and independence were prominent traits in the young man's "make up," which have clung to him through his successful life. At parting the father proposed, as an incentive for the lad to economize, that if on his twenty-first birthday, he had saved from his earnings \$100, he would present him with an equal amount. Before Walter became of age the father died, but all had been arranged, and as Walter had saved over \$2,000 he received the \$100 on his becoming twenty-one. After a few day's recreation at his brother's he started out in search of work. After walking 300 miles, and failing to obtain

a situation, he came back to his brother's home much discouraged, a victim of hard luck. Shortly after his return he hired out to a neighbor to chop tamarac poles for fencing at \$8 per month. He worked hard through the long winter, laying aside every dollar, and the following spring purchased forty acres of land adjoining his brother's farm, walking to Milwaukee in the night time to secure the deed, a distance of forty miles. These lands he sold two weeks after his purchase at \$400, thus netting a handsome profit, and was at heart the richest man in the northwest. His first venture in the way of business was establishing the first store and the building of the first hotel at Palmyra, Wisconsin, known as the Palmyra House.

In this hotel his married life began, his bride being but a girl of seventeen, who did the honors as landlady as with an old-fashioned grace born of experience. It was in this city the firm of W. C. and S. Willson had its birth, the partnership covering a period of thirty-six years. The Willsons did business here for two years, and selling, next located at Omro, Wisconsin, then a new town, again engaging in general merchandizing and also built the Fox River Hotel. This hotel was sold two years later, and the Commercial House was built by them, which was sold directly after completion. Sumler's time was given to the care of the store, while W. C. engaged with Robert W. Crawford in the lumber business, which yielded good margins. The efforts of the Willsons in their various enterprises while in Wisconsin was an unbroken train of successes, their accumulations, amounting to \$22,000, being brought to Webster City, to which may be attributed its thrifty growth and development. In 1855 they came to Iowa, locating and purchasing large tracts of land, part of which they platted and christened Webster

City. In the summer of the same year they built a saw-mill, being the first in the county, and also did the first grinding here. Shortly after this mill was purchased by Stoddard & Prey. In 1856 Messrs. Willson brought to Hamilton County the first steam saw-mill, which was afterward sold to Rosencrans, Fenton, Jones & Co. During the summer of 1857 Willson Brothers erected a large brick flouring-mill at a cost of \$15,000, with three sets of burrs, and a capacity of 200 barrels of flour per day. Upon these mills the towns of Sioux City, Algona and Fort Dodge depended, and in fact the entire northwest was supplied from the Willson Mills, all of the machinery for these mills being hauled overland from the Mississippi River and Iowa City. Frontier life to men of cultivation and refinement, without mail facilities and communication with the outside world, made their pioneer home almost unendurable. Realizing the advantages of mail service the two brothers sought about to open a thoroughfare—through the Western Stage Company—between Cedar Falls and Sioux City, and succeeded in bearing away the palm in opposition to competing rival lines represented by T. I. Allen, Sterrill & Devotee, favoring Batch Grove, with Snell & Butterworth in the interests of Homer. To secure this line no small effort was required in the face of such rivalry, but determination was plainly written on the Willson banner, and the route was established at the expense of a heavy bonus. In the winter of 1856-'57, Mr. W. C. Willson represented his people in the Iowa Senate, and through his instrumentality Hamilton County was formed and Webster City made the capital. At the time of the Spirit Lake massacre of 1857 Webster City was put under martial law, with John Peak as Colonel and Walter C. Willson as Captain of Home Guards. A

House of Representatives

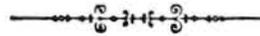
company of fifty men organized at Webster City, accompanied by a less number from Fort Dodge, hastened to the scene of this horrible butchery. Much suffering was experienced from hunger, exposure and severe cold among those who went to the rescue, Captain Johnston, of Webster City, and a Mr. Burgholder, surrendering their lives through loyalty and love for their fellow-men. In this time of need Messrs. Willson were wide awake to the situation, and immediately started a wagon laden with barrels of pork, flour, meal and provisions of all kinds to this field of bloodshed and suffering. In the fall of 1861 W. C. Willson moved to Chicago, embarking in the commission business, partner in the firm of Rand, Willson & Co., at the same time conducting the lumber business under the firm styled Willson, Ennis & Smith, being successful in each. He retired from both branches and returned to Webster City six years later, owing, or on account of the land grant made to the old Dubuque & Sioux City Railroad Company, and re-grant to John I. Blair, knowing he had the means and ability to complete this road to Sioux City. To this enterprise Mr. Willson devoted his entire time and energies for one year, assuming the responsibilities to place the ties and put down the iron from a point near Webster City to Storm Lake, a distance of eighty miles. On the first engine that crossed the bridge at Dubuque Mr. Willson was a passenger, in company with Colonel Mason, and it was he that held the lever that controlled the first engine that startled the natives with its shrill scream, in every quiet hamlet from Webster City to terminal. In the year 1869 the old Willson House was built and operated by W. C. and S. Willson, a commodious and modern structure, erected at an expense of \$15,000, Mr. S. Willson giving it his special attention,

also having charge of the store, while W. C. attended the flouring-mill and superintended their large areas of lands. Most of the principal business buildings of Webster City were built by the Willson brothers, or by their aid. Attention may be called to this one fact, that the Willsons have erected in all one hundred and thirty-three buildings within the limits of Webster City; the Opera House was built at an outlay of \$20,000, the brick block on Second street, now occupied by Lee Brothers, five mills, three hotels, etc. Mr. S. Willson gave much of his time to educational interests, being a member of the school board for many years, and president when the present beautiful school-building was built, he selling the bonds and negotiating the loans. He was an active, far-sighted business man, and devoted to any cause he might espouse. The partnership of the Willson Brothers existed until the winter of 1882, when the bond was broken only on the death of Sumler. In the fall of 1876 the Webster City Crooked Creek Railroad and Coal Company was organized with Walter C. Willson as president and general manager. This company purchased large tracts of land in Webster County, and laid out the town of Lehigh, developing what is known as the Crooked Creek Coal Mines, and in the year 1886 the same company constructed the Webster City & Southwestern Railroad.

W. C. Willson was born in the State of New York, in the year 1824, in the village of Arkwright, a son of Zebina and Polly (Smith) Willson. In early life he was taught that "honesty was the best policy," that perseverance and industry would bring sure reward. From these teachings he has never departed, and as the result, every ambition has been realized. Immovable and firm in his convictions, faithful and confiding with friends, cheerful and courteous in busi-

ness, affectionate and devoted in his home; if these are the essentials to greatness, then Walter Willson's name belongs to the roll of honor. He married, July 27, 1848, Miss Calista Louisa Rickerson, daughter of Hon. Charles C. Rickerson, and also a native of New York State. Her father moved to Palmyra, Wisconsin, in the year 1842, and two years later to the State capital, where he became quite conspicuous in the political affairs of the State, serving a number of years in the State Legislature. He died of a fever in Watertown, New York, while returning from a visit to the Pacific coast. In conclusion, it is but fair to add, that whatever the success of our subject, much credit is due the estimable wife in whom Mr. Willson has ever found a reliable and safe counselor. In society she has proved herself the one bright star in the social cluster, beloved by all, imitated by many, courteous and kind at all times, everywhere winning friends. In total, Mrs. Willson is one of the popular ladies of the land. To Mr. and Mrs. Willson were born four children, of whom three are deceased. Frank E. is a resident of Webster City, where he is associated in business with his father. He married, March 20, 1888, Miss Minnie A. Arthur. Sumler Willson was born March 10, 1826. He was married November 4, 1858, to Miss Abbie M. Holt, a daughter of Lemuel and Susan Holt, natives of Vermont, of English and Scotch ancestry. Mrs. Willson was born in Vermont, remaining there until 1857, when she came to Iowa, and was married the next year. To them were born two children—Clara, wife of C. W. Thompson, of San Diego, California, and Terressa M., wife of M. C. Henneberry, of Akron, Colorado. Mr. Sumler Willson was a prominent member of the Masonic fraternity.

ARTHUR B. MILLARD, farmer and stock-raiser, was born in Putnam County, Illinois, September 27, 1849, a son of Benjamin Millard, a prominent citizen of Webster City. He was six years old when his parents moved to Hamilton County, and here he was reared and educated. He remained at home until his marriage, and then settled on the farm where he now lives, which is a part of the land entered by his father. He has always given his attention to agriculture and stock-raising, and being a practical, energetic man, has been successful. His farm is now one of the best in the county, his 160 acres all being under fine cultivation. Mr. Millard was married December 19, 1871, to Antoinette Powers, a native of Cleveland, Ohio, daughter of Salmon and Susan (Depew) Powers, early settlers of Hardin County, Iowa. Mr. and Mrs. Millard have three children: Louressa D., Myrtle and Loral Fern. In politics Mr. Millard is a Republican.



ANDREW J. LARSON, a well-known, enterprising citizen of Scott Township, was born in Norway, March 25, 1836, a son of John and Elizabeth Larson. In 1857 the parents came to America with their family, and settled first in Grundy County, Illinois, and subsequently moved to Hamilton County, Iowa, and settled on section 19, Scott Township, where the father died in 1865. The mother and younger children live in Hamilton County. They had a family of eight children—Enger, of Story County, Iowa; Andrew J., of Hamilton County; Lars J., of Story County; Ole J., of Illinois; Anna J., who died in Story County, aged thirty-four years; Samuel J., Oliver J. and Melinda, who died at the age of twenty-

FamilySearch™ International Genealogical Index v5.0

North America

Family Group Record

Husband

[Walter Cordon Willson](#)

[Pedigree](#)

Birth: 28 DEC 1824 Laona, Chautauqua, New York

Christening:

Marriage: 27 JUL 1848

Death: 19 AUG 1900 Webster City, Hamilton, Iowa

Burial:

Father: [Zebina Willson](#)

[Family](#)

Mother:

Wife

[Calista Louisa Ricketson](#)

[Pedigree](#)

Birth: 18 MAR 1831 Rutland, Meigs, Ohio

Christening:

Marriage: 27 JUL 1848

Death: 25 NOV 1907

Burial:

Father: [Charles Cook Ricketson](#)

[Family](#)

Mother: [Sally Everton](#)

Children

1. [Emma Amelia Willson](#)

[Pedigree](#)

Female

Birth: MAY 1853 Webster City, Hamilton, Iowa

Christening:

Death: APR 1854

Burial:

2. [Charles Walter Willson](#)

[Pedigree](#)

Male

Birth: 1856 Webster City, Hamilton, Iowa

Christening:

Death: 25 MAR 1857

Burial:

3. [Frank Elmer Willson](#)

[Pedigree](#)

Male

Birth: 11 JUN 1861 Webster City, Hamilton, Iowa

Christening:

Death: 25 MAR 1907

Burial:

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You searched for **Walter C. Willson** in **Iowa**

1880 United States Federal Census

Name:	Walter C. Willson
Home in 1880:	Webster City, Hamilton, Iowa
Age:	58
Estimated Birth Year:	abt 1822
Birthplace:	New York
Relation to Head of Household:	Self (Head)
Spouse's Name:	Calista
Neighbors:	View others on page
Occupation:	Speculator
Marital Status:	Married
Race:	White
Gender:	Male
Cannot read/write:	
Blind:	View image
Deaf and dumb:	
Otherwise disabled:	
Idiotic or insane:	
Household Members:	
Name	Age
Walter C. Willson	58
Calista Willson	45
Frank E. Willson	19

Source Citation: Year: 1880; Census Place: Webster City, Hamilton, Iowa; Roll T9_342; Family History Film: 1254342; Page: 197.2000; Enumeration District: 102; Image: 0400.

Source Information:

Ancestry.com and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 1880 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: The Generations Network, Inc., 2005. 1880 U.S. Census Index provided by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints © Copyright 1999 Intellectual Reserve, Inc. All rights reserved. All use is subject to the limited use license and other terms and conditions applicable to this site. Original data: United States of America, Bureau of the Census. *Tenth Census of the United States, 1880*. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1880. T9, 1,454 rolls.

Description:

This database is an index to 50 million individuals enumerated in the 1880 United States Federal Census. Census takers recorded many details including each person's name, address, occupation, relationship to the head of household, race, sex, age at last birthday, marital status, place of birth, parents' place of birth. Additionally, the names of those listed on the population schedule are linked to actual images of the 1880 Federal Census. [Learn more...](#)



You searched for **Walter C. Willson** in **Iowa**

1900 United States Federal Census

Name:	Walter P Willson [Walter C Willson]												
Home in 1900:	Webster City, Hamilton, Iowa												
Age:	76												
Birth Date:	Dec 1823												
Birthplace:	New York												
Race:	White												
Ethnicity:	American												
Gender:	Male												
Relationship to Head of House:	Head												
Father's Birthplace:	New York												
Mother's Birthplace:	New York												
Spouse's Name:	Calista L												
Marriage year:	1850												
Marital Status:	Married												
Years Married:	50												
Residence :	Webster City, Hamilton, Iowa												
Occupation:	View on Image												
Neighbors:	View others on page												
Household Members:	<table> <thead> <tr> <th>Name</th> <th>Age</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Walter P Willson</td> <td>76</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Calista L Willson</td> <td>69</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Frank E Willson</td> <td>38</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Minni A Willson</td> <td>36</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Walter C Willson</td> <td>6</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Name	Age	Walter P Willson	76	Calista L Willson	69	Frank E Willson	38	Minni A Willson	36	Walter C Willson	6
Name	Age												
Walter P Willson	76												
Calista L Willson	69												
Frank E Willson	38												
Minni A Willson	36												
Walter C Willson	6												

Source Citation: Year: 1900; Census Place: Webster City, Hamilton, Iowa; Roll T623_435 Page: 4B; Enumeration District: 102.

Source Information:

Ancestry.com. 1900 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: The Generations Network, Inc., 2004. Original data: United States of America, Bureau of the Census. Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1900. T623, 1854 rolls.

Description:

This database is an index to individuals enumerated in the 1900 United States Federal Census, the Twelfth Census of the United States. Census takers recorded many details including each person's name, address, relationship to the head of household, color or race, sex, month and year of birth, age at last birthday, marital status, number of years married, the total number of children born of the mother, the number of those children living, birthplace, birthplace of father and mother, if the individual was foreign born, the year of immigration and the number of years in the United States, the citizenship status of foreign-born individuals over age twenty-one, occupation, and more. Additionally, the names of those listed on the population schedule are linked to actual images of the 1900 Federal Census. [Learn more...](#)

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Last Name:

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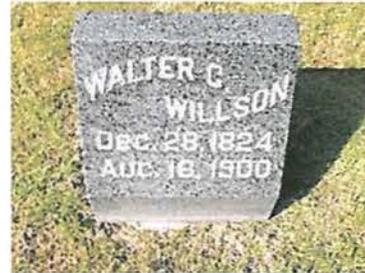
Birth: Dec. 28, 1824
Death: Aug. 16, 1900

Burial::
Graceland Cemetery
Webster City
Hamilton County
Iowa, USA

Created by: Kstalt
Record added: Oct 19 2008
Find A Grave Memorial# 30682851



Added by: Kstalt



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