

# EX-GOV. HIGGINS DIES IN OLEAN

## End Comes While He Is Unconscious, with His Family at His Side.

### ILL NEARLY SIX WEEKS

### For More Than a Year the Fatal Malady Was Known—

### Sketch of His Career.

*Special to The New York Times.*

OLEAN, Feb. 12.—Ex-Gov. Frank W. Higgins died this evening at 8:40 o'clock, while unconscious. His passing away was peaceful. At his bedside were the members of his immediate family, consisting of Mrs. Higgins, Miss Josephine Higgins, and Harry Higgins, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Sullivan Smith of Angelica, brother and sister-in-law of Mr. Higgins; Mrs. J. B. Cameron, a sister of Mrs. Higgins; Miss Charlotte Cameron, and the attending physician, Dr. De V. M. Hibbard.

Mr. Higgins had been confined to his bed since just after the inauguration of his successor, Gov. Hughes. He had been a sufferer for more than a year from a heart disease, and his friends for a long time had expected an early fatal termination.

Gov. Higgins's oldest son, O. T. Higgins, is ill in Pasadena, Cal.

Mr. Higgins's funeral services will be held on Friday at 2 o'clock from his late residence, the Rev. J. W. Ashton of St. Stephen's Church officiating. The family desires that there be no display on the occasion. The interment will be later.

Frank Wayland Higgins was born at Rushford, Allegany County, on Aug. 18, 1856. His father, Orrin T. Higgins, was a successful business man and his grandfather a pioneer physician of distinction in the western part of the State. It is related that the younger Higgins was never noted for his scholarship, nor for his application to work up to the time he completed his earlier education in the academy at Pike, Wyoming County, but he did have an ambition to become a General in the army, and accordingly besought his parents to send him to a military school. The request was granted, and the year 1871 found him at the Riverview Military Academy, at Poughkeepsie.

It may be supposed that Riverview cured him of his desire to be a great General, for on his graduation in 1873 he went to work for his father for a year or two until the pursuit of a larger career led him to obtain an appointment as Western sales agent of an oil refinery with headquarters at Chicago. Two years later he was at Stanton, Mich., where he became a partner in the mercantile firm of Wood, Thayer & Co. It was in Stanton that ex-Gov. Higgins laid the foundations of the fortune that gave him rank among the richest men in the western part of New York after he returned to this State and settled at Olean. In Stanton also he married Miss Kate C. Noble. The return to Olean was a few years after his marriage, and he entered the firm of Higgins, Blodgett & Co., in which his father was the senior partner.

When young Higgins was 23 years old he became general manager of his father's business. His entry into politics in Olean about this time came naturally enough, for he had acquired pronounced opinions in matters political, when he was not more than a boy; they dated from the Greely campaign of 1872, when he refused to accept his father's political precepts, and declared his allegiance to Grant. This almost produced a break between the man and the boy, and for years—even down to the National Convention of 1888—politics was not discussed between them.

#### His Work as State Senator.

In 1883 a delegation of Republicans visited Frank Higgins at his office and asked him to be a candidate for the State Senate. But he wouldn't listen to them, and they went away. Soon there arose a great "popular" demand for the nomination of Higgins. The papers of the then Thirty-second District were full of it. Higgins's mail was overrun with letters from would-be constituents, and in the end he yielded, only to find out after his election that the flood of letters had been skillfully arranged by the politicians whose importunities he had first resisted.

Frank Higgins undertook his Senatorial duties in a manner that earned for him after a session or two the reputation of being one of the strong men of that body. Taking office in 1894, he became in four years Chairman of the Committee on Finance, a position that he held continuously until his election as Lieutenant Governor four years later.

#### His "Regularity" and Its Results.

Gov. Higgins was nominated for Chief Executive in 1904, and carried into office on the wave that swept Theodore Roosevelt into the Presidency by his own right of election, although he ran significantly 95,000 votes behind the ticket. Then came the crucial test of his "regularity." The insurance scandals broke out and disclosed Francis Hendricks, the intimate friend and political confidant of the Governor, at the head of a department that a few months later was described by Charles E. Hughes in terms that need no further enlargement. Another of the Governor's personal machin was Frederick D. Kilburn, Superintendent of Banks, his old associate in the State Senate. In the intervals of the agitation against Hendricks the alleged derelictions of the Superintendent of Banks furnished ample opportunity for attack.

Now came the question of an insurance investigation in June of 1905, when the Legislature was in extraordinary session passing on the charges against Justice Warren B. Hooker. The Governor, whose personal integrity not even his bitterest enemies had ever questioned, remained still "regular" and proclaimed that the agitation for an investigation had died out even to the eve of the day when he sent a message to the Legislature recommending that it be ordered. At last the investigation was actually under way, with Charles E. Hughes in the driver's seat. The insurance Department was probed mercilessly, the relations of both Odell and Platt to the high financiers in control of the great insurance companies were spread broadcast over the pages of the newspapers of the State, and it was commonly enough said that much more remained undisclosed which the Armstrong Committee "for the lack of time" was able to avoid going into.

The Legislature of 1906 came into being. Gov. Higgins, retaining Francis Hendricks as Superintendent of Insurance and Frederick D. Kilburn as Superintendent of Banks, appeared as a reformer in other directions, lost for the time being his mantle of regularity, and, with Speaker Wadsworth at the head of his Assembly following, led a fight on the element in his own party that was charged with responsibility for the ill-repute that it had fallen into. But there was Hendricks and there was Kilburn, also H. H. Bender as Fiscal Supervisor of Charities.

At Olean, where Gov. Higgins had always made his home, he was plain Frank Higgins to the day of his death. His home there was a big, roomy, comfortable Colonial house that he built a dozen years ago. His four stores were institutions of the place. In the Episcopal Church of the place Gov. Higgins was a Vestryman for many years.

Gov. Higgins leaves a widow, two sons, and one daughter.

The illness of ex-Gov. Higgins covers practically the whole of his administration of two years. His health was not robust when he was nominated for Governor in 1904, and it is but chronicling the truth to say that the campaign taxed him greatly. Following his election he was able to rest up, and for a time he felt better than in months. On assuming office, however, the cares of the Governorship wore on him and each month increased the pressure.

There are but six ex-Governors of the State of New York living—Cleveland, Roosevelt, Hill, Morton, Black, and Odell.