LEVIP. MORTON DIES AT RHINEBECK HOME ON 96TH BIRTHDAY: Ex-Vice President a
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LEVI P. MORTON DIES AT RHINEBECK HOME ON 96TH BIRTHDAY

Ex-Vice President and Governor of New York Expires from Bronchial Pneumonia.

ILL ONLY A FEW DAYS

Birthday Formally Celebrated Saturday by School Children of Rhinebeck and Rhinecliff.

TWO DAUGHTERS AT BEDSIDE

Congressman and Minister to France Among Positions Held by Financier and Philanthropist.

Special to The New York Times.

RHINEBECK, N. Y., May 16.—Levi P. Morton, Vice President of the United States during President Benjamin Harrison's term from 1889 to 1893, and Governor of New York from 1895 to 1897, died from bronchial pneumonia at his home at Ellerslie at 8:30 o'clock tonight, on his ninety-sixth birthday.

Mr. Morton caught cold three days ago and appeared to be only slightly affected, but Dr. W. K. Losee of Red Hook, who was called in, told the family at once that it was a bronchial attack, which was likely to prove treacherous in the case of a man of the great age to which ex-Governor Morton had attained. While he did not appear dangerously ill yesterday, Mr. Morton was unable to leave his room in his magnificent country home at Ellerslie to see school children from the Rhinecliff and Rhinebeck schools, who had come to his country estate, according to their annual custom, to celebrate his birthday with a party on the Ellerslie grounds.

Mr. Morton grew worse rapidly during the night. Today he was unconscious, and Dr. Losee informed the daughter, Mrs. Helen Morton, who had been with her father since his previous illness, and his nephew, Morton Mino, who has had the management of his interests for the last seven years, that there was no hope. Seven years ago an attack of arterio-sclerosis caused Mr. Morton, then 89 years old, to retire from the management of his affairs, which he had conducted energetically himself up to that time.

Another daughter, Mrs. William C. Eustis, of Washington, D. C., and her husband were at Mr. Morton's death bed. Miss Mary Morton, another daughter, was unable to reach Ellerslie from Germantown, Pa., tonight, but will arrive in the morning. There are ten living grandchildren, five the children of Mrs. Eustis and five the children of Mrs. Winthrop Rutherfurd, now dead, of Allamuchi, N. J.

Mr. Morton was given up by his physicians in 1913, when he appeared at the point of death from arterio-sclerosis, but he rallied with an astonishing exhibition of vitality and regained something of his former ruggedness. Giving up his financial interests, he spent his time in Washington, D. C., in the Winter and at his country estate in the Summer.

Until a few days ago, he had been driven about his grounds and around Rhinebeck in his automobile, apparently enjoying wonderful vigor for a man approaching the century mark. His great age and apparent heartiness had made him a marvel among the residents of the district. His mind was still clear, although his memory had become somewhat impaired within the last three or four years. Up to that time he had retained the keen interest in national affairs wihch had marked his career for three-quarters of a century. He had never lost his enthusiasm for the Republican Party and had been a steady contributor to its State and National campaign funds.

In the last twenty years, practically all of his close friends had died. The only men living, with whom he had been closely associated during the period of his activity in politics and finance, are ex-Senator Chauncey M. Depew, Henry Clews and Judge William G. Choate, who is now 90 years old. Among his friends of a younger generation is Elihu Root, now 75 years old, who was regarded as a "youngster" by Mr. Morton, his nephew said.

Mr. Morton became noticeably feebler after the death of his second wife in 1918. A year ago Surrogate Gleason of Poughkeepsie went to the estate to examine the former Governor in connection with a suit brought by the State Controller against Mrs. Morton's estate and found that the impairment of the aged man's memory made a hearing difficult.

Late in Entering Public Life.

Levi Parsons Morton did not begin his official career until after he was 54 years old. His earlier life he spent in amassing a fortune, and when his rise to fame came it was rapid, and quite unusual in sequence. First he was Congressman, then Minister to France, next Vice President of the United States, and finally Governor of this State. Intermingled were efforts to be elected to the United States Senate and occasional undefined "booms" for the Presidency.

Mr. Morton was born on a little farm in Shoreham, Vt., on May 16, 1824, the son of the Rev. Daniel Oliver Morton, a Congregationalist of the strictly Puritan type, who brought up a typically large Puritan family on a maximum salary of $800 a year. He was named after his mother's brother, Levi Par-

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LEVI P. MORTON DIES ON 96TH BIRTHDAY

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sons, the first American missionary to Palestine. The family tree was rooted in original Puritan stock, the lineage being traced directly to George Morton of Eawtry, Yorkshire, England, who landed at Plymouth, Mass., from the ship Ann in 1623. The contrast of the early poverty of Levi P. Morton with his wealth in later life furnished the bulwark of much political argument directed to enhance Mr. Morton's chances of election at the hands of the people.

Mr. Morton's education was limited to that which he could acquire in the academy at Shoreham. The college degrees bestowed in later life were honorary. He started on his independent career when he was 16 years old, beginning as a clerk in a store at Enfield, Mass. At the age of 20, by his thrift, honesty, and economy, he was the owner of a general store in Hanover, N. H. He stayed there for five years, and in 1849 became connected with the house of James M. Beebe & Co. of Boston as a clerk. A year later he was a member of this firm. In four years he came to New York and established the firm of Morton & Grinnell, which was replaced in 1863 by the banking house of Morton, Bliss & Co. in this city and Morton, Rose & Co. in London. The latter became the fiscal agents for the United States, and were intrusted with the payment of the Alabama claims and Halifax fisheries awards, which together amounted to $21,000,000. Young Mr. Morton, about 1875, founded the New York syndicate that funded the United States National debt and disposed of its bonds. Thus Mr. Morton became an international figure in the financial world before he was 50 years old. His fortune was one of the largest in America, and as a contributor to the Republican Party Mr. Morton could always be relied upon.

Commissioner to Paris Exposition.

He was first appointed to office by President Hayes as Honorary Commissioner of the United States to the Paris Exposition of 1878. In the same year he was honored by the richest Congressional district in the United States, the Eleventh of New York, by election to Congress. He defeated his Tammany Hall opponent by 7,000 votes. In Congress, because of his experience in finance, his advice was sought on all financial legislation.

Mr. Morton strongly opposed the unlimited coinage of silver in 1879, and characterized the measure then before the House as a "bill for the relief of owners of silver mines and silver bullion in the United States and Europe."

He served as a member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. He was reelected from the Eleventh District in 1880, and in that year he received, informally, the offer of the nomination for the Vice Presidency from the Republican Convention in Chicago. He declined, and owing to his extreme modesty and aversion to publicity, it never became known why he declined.

The banker's first wife, who was the daughter of Elijah H. Kimball of Flatlands, L. I., had died in 1871, leaving no children. In 1873 Mr. Morton had married the daughter of William L. Street of Poughkeepsie. Mrs. Morton was well known in society, and when Mr. Morton became Minister to France in 1881 the legation, largely through the activities of Mrs. Morton, became a great social centre. The legation, immediately after the arrival of the Mortons, was moved into spacious quarters, and there great artists, statesmen, writers, and others of prominence were lavishly entertained.

Mr. Morton, as Minister, secured from the French Government the rescinding of the edict which prohibited the importation into France of American pork. He also brought about such modifications of the regulations regarding corporations as enabled American insurance companies to open agencies in France. When Cleveland succeeded Arthur, Mr. Morton resigned.

Received Honorary Degrees.

The degree of LL. D. was conferred upon him by Dartmouth in 1881 and by Middlebury in 1882. He was a candidate for United States Senator in 1881 but was defeated by William M. Evarts after a long contest in the Legislature. He was a candidate for Senator again in 1887, and was again defeated, this time by Frank Hiscock.

He was nominated for Vice President at the Republican Convention which nominated Harrison for President at Chicago, June 25, 1888. His residence at Washington during the four years of the Harrison Administration was marked by the cordiality of his receptions, which had given to him European celebrity as a host when he was Minister of the United States at Paris.

His house on Scott Circle, in Washington, will remain in the memory of those who visited it. Its large hall was decorated with Oriental stuffs and carpets. The reception rooms were white and gold. The official reception room was of a delicate tea shade and opened into a larger room, hung in chintz-pattern silk. The dining room was in oak and red, with buffets of ebony. The family sitting room, above the library, was a garden of green leaves and fragrant flowers.

After the wife of President Harrison died Mrs. Morton became "the first lady of the land." The Vice President and Mrs. Morton continued to entertain lavishly. Washington visitors delighted in seeing the Vice President going for a walk in the morning. With him almost invariably were three or four of his children. They clung to his arms and he romped with them along the streets.

Washington has not yet forgotten the Harrison inaugural ball in the Pension Building, when Mr. and Mrs. Morton walked through the building with all their children, the latter being dressed in the simplest of white gowns.

Levi P. Morton received the hardest political blow of his career when he was not renominated for Vice President with Harrison in 1892. His extreme calmness prevented any disclosures of regret, however, and his dinner to Vice President Stevenson on the latter's arrival in Washington was reported at the time as "the model of gracefulness." THE NEW YORK TIMES, commenting on his record as Vice President and his failure to obtain a renomination, said:

> The treatment of Vice President Morton by the politicians of his own party in his own State has not been such as to encourage modest fidelity and dignified performance of duties not too attractive in themselves. Mr. Morton had every claim to a renomination that Mr. Harrison had, and some that the President could hardly pretend to. He has filled his office with equal ability and with more unselfishness; he has kept aloof from the factional quarrels of his party in his own State; he has never sought to promote his personal ends at the expense of others; he has had nothing to do with the trade and sicker in offices that has been the disgrace and weakness of the Administration. Within his sphere he has added as much to the character and strength of the party as was possible. It was not seemly that he should be set aside when a candidate was taken from his own State, and it is not to be supposed that he would have been had Mr. Harrison and his friends been as loyal to him as Mr. Morton has uniformly been to Mr. Harrison. Mr. Morton, however, if he has missed the deserved recognition of a renomination, is free from the danger of defeat, and, whatever the result of the election, will retire from his post with the general and cordial respect of his fellow-citizens of both parties.

From Politics to Farming.

After his retirement from Washington Mr. Morton lived on his 1,000-acre farm, Ellerslie, at Rhinebeck on the Hudson. He developed his farm into a beautiful garden, replete with lakes, conservatories, Italian gardens, and beautiful walks and drives. He maintained his own dairy of 100 Guernseys and engaged to some extent in scientific farming. The estate still maintains the palatial home of the Mortons, and there one can find a fine collection of paintings, rare books, curios, and other objects of art.

On Sept. 18, 1894, Mr. Morton was nominated for Governor of New York. He was elected, serving during 1895 and 1896.

Many were the philanthropies of Mr. Morton. Among the churches to which he gave were Grace Church and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. At the former the chapel house was built in memory of Mr. Morton's first wife. At the latter the gifts of Mr. and Mrs. Morton are said to have totaled in value many hundreds of thousands of dollars, much of which was spent on elaborate services and on the gold altar.

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