

DEATH SUMMONS 2 LOCAL PIONEERS

GEORGE STEBBINS AND V. F. RATHBUN PASS AWAY FROM PARALYSIS, HEART TROUBLE

Two Groton pioneers, men who came to this section in their early youth and were instrumental in establishing a civilization in the Great Northwest, passed into the beyond last week, their deaths coming a scant 14 hours apart. V. F. Rathbun died at his winter home at Pomona, Calif., while Mr. Stebbins expired at his home in Groton. Both of them were unexpected to Groton friends.

V. F. Rathbun's Death

Mr. Rathbun, for many years a councilman of Groton and at one time serving as mayor of the city, passed away last Wednesday morning, January 12, at 11:20 a. m., at his winter home in Pomona, Calif. His death followed a stroke of paralysis, which he suffered January 5, and from which he never recovered. The funeral was held Friday afternoon at Pomona and interment was made in the cemetery at that place.

Mr. Rathbun was born at Sparta, Wis., February 20, 1860 and came to South Dakota in 1882, settling in or near Groton.

During his early years in this community Mr. Rathbun pioneered in land and business enterprises as well as government. He established one of the first grain and flour mills in this part of the country and likewise installed the first telephone exchange in his store on Main street. He joined the Groton Fire Department in 1883 and for 20 years served as fire chief. He engaged in the mercantile business at various times, having both Ira Perkins and George Aves as partners, while in a civic way he represented his ward on the city council a number of years and was mayor of Groton at one time, as well as president of the council.

For the past ten years Mr. and Mrs. Rathbun, who were married in June, 1886, have been spending their winters in California with their sons and daughter, Mrs. Myrtle Patterson. He is survived by Mrs. Rathbun, two daughters, Mrs. Myrtle Patterson of Pomona, and Mrs. J. G. English of St. Paul, as well as four sons—J. E. Rathbun, G. E. Rathbun and Wm. Virgil Rathbun of Pomona, and Charles of Groton, together with two sisters, Mrs. Etta Aves of Groton and Mrs. Charlotte Schwab of Linton, N. D., as well as 11 grand-children.

George Stebbins

The other pioneer, George Stebbins, who expired the following day, Thursday afternoon, Jan. 13, passed away peacefully and quietly as he had lived during the fifty-seven years he had been a resident of this community. His heart failed him as he was sitting in a chair at the home of his sister, Mrs. J. Wilson, his head dropped on his chest and his soul went the way of all kindly spirits.

Mr. Stebbins was a New Englander by birth. He was born in Franklin, Vermont, June 5, 1860. He spent 20 years of his life there and then moved to Dayton, Minn., and remained there until he was 21 years of age. He came to South Dakota in the fall of 1881 and homesteaded on land three miles east of Groton, which was in his possession at the time of his death. In South Dakota he practiced the careful and frugal habits of his youth and gradually added to the land he homesteaded. He often remarked, but not in a boasting way, that every cent he made or spent came from South Dakota soil. Feeling that he was indebted to the state, he remained a loyal citizen to the last, although frequently spending the winter in California, but not in late years.

Mr. Stebbins was never married and during his residence in Groton to which place he moved from the farm in 1909, made his home with the Wilson family. He leaves to mourn his loss two sisters, Mrs. J. Wilson, of Groton and Mrs. Nellie J. Erwin, of Fremont, Neb.

The funeral was held Sunday afternoon from the Paetzick funeral home and the remains were laid to rest in the soil he loved so well. Rev. C. B. Cedar conducted the funeral services.