



M.W. JAMES VROOM, M.A.
GRAND MASTER, 1926-1927.

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St. Stephen Reaped Benefits of His Devotion to This Community When Wider Fields Held Out Promise of Much Greater Honor and Reward.

SERVED AS TOWN CLERK 45 YEARS

St. Stephen lost one of her most distinguished native sons in the death at early hour Sunday morning of James Vroom, M.A. town clerk for the last 45 years following an illness extending over several weeks. An outstanding figure in community life, Mr. Vroom was widely known both in his own province and in wider spheres in educational, cultural and Masonic circles,

and his death represents a severe loss to the many organizations and interests in which he devoted his unusual talents during a long and crowded life.

Mr. Vroom was born at St Stephen in 1846 of Loyalist decent and Dutch Colonial extraction the descendant of Pieters Cornelissen Vroom, who came to Manhattan in 1612, and of New Jersey Loyalists who settled near Clemenstport, N.S. in 1783. He attended school in his native town and graduated at an age so early that they would not admit him to Normal School, and he entered a printing office in Saint John when only fourteen afterwards being employed for a short time on the Calais Advertiser.

On graduating later from Normal School, he taught in the Madras school at St. George and for some seven years at St. Andrews. He was headmaster of the Model school at Fredericton and an instructor at the Normal School where he was offered the chair of botany on which he had become a recognized authority. This he declined. He then took a position in an Episcopal School for boys that had been started at Presque Isle by the Bishop of Maine, afterwards coming to St. Stephen to teach where he was a fellow teacher with Dr. W.F. Ganong. He received the flattering offer of a chair in botany at McGill University but refused it feeling that he had not had sufficient training in microscopic work.

Became Town Clerk

He gave up teaching in 1887 and became the town clerk and a little later editor also of the St. Croix Courier. It was then that he prepared and had printed the Historical Series which are now on file in the library of the University of Pennsylvania, Harvard College, and the Public Archives of Canada. Enquiries are frequent today from historical writers as to where this series may be obtained but with the exception

of the three named and Mr. Vroom's own copy, none appear to be extant.

Honorary Degree

Although not a college graduate, Mr. Vroom was awarded the degree of M.A. by the University of New Brunswick for original research in botany and local history. This unique distinction was a tribute to his work interested always in natural science the unusual quality of his mind and acute powers of observation produced an astounding knowledge. James Vroom became highly educated but not in the manner of the average person who has to gather information from others. He gathered it as genius does, at first hand and from original sources. This was also recognized and by no less than the Doubleday Page Co. who offered him the position of botanical expert in connection with their various publications at their plant in Harrisburg, Penn. Mr. Vroom, who was then in St. Stephen, and was a great home lover, declined. The offer was repeated and again, he declined. On this the firm wrote him asking if he thought he was right in remaining in so small a town when an opportunity for usefulness had been afforded him elsewhere. But he persisted in his refusal to leave his mother and sisters, to whom he was devoted.

Mr. Vroom had a well-developed musical talent having been trained under the Reverend Edward S. Medley, rector of Christ Church in St. Andrews during the years he spent in that town.

In course of time he became, in addition to being town clerk, town treasurer and secretary of the School Board. The two latter positions he gave up a few years since because of advancing years, but the position of town clerk he retained until his death.

He was one of the instigators of the De Mont + Champlain Tercentenary in 1904 and a

member of the international committee of arrangement. The inscription on the tablet on St. Croix Island which commemorates this first attempt at settlement of white men on this continent north of Florida was written by him.

In Masonic Order

A mason for sixty years, he was in 1926 when eighty years of age, made Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of New Brunswick and held office for two years. He was an authority on Masonry and a writer on Masonic subjects. His monograph on "*Ancient York Masons in British America*" was published in London in 1912. He had been an associate editor of various publications and was an honorary member of The Fourth Estate Lodge of Boston, composed exclusively of newspaper men. At his death he was treasurer of the St Stephen Preceptory of Knights Templar and secretary of the St. Stephen Royal Arch chapter.

Up to his last illness, he had, in spite of his advanced age of eighty-six, retained his bodily soundness and mental clarity; the latter remaining until practically his last moments.

A National Scholar

An educationalist by nature and application, James Vroom spent his long life in promoting education and culture. By remaining, by his own choice, in a limited sphere he limited himself, but his usefulness has been remarkable. He was a great scholar, and he added a unique distinction to the position he has occupied in the town. It has meant much to St. Stephen to have such a man guiding its affairs over so long a period.

Mr. Vroom was unmarried. He is survived by two sisters, Misses Victoria, and Beatrice at home, and three brothers, Venerable Archdeacon Vroom of Halifax, E.G. Vroom of St. Lambert, and Charles of St. Stephen.

Mr. Vroom was for many years a leading spirit in the affairs of the Chipman Memorial Hospital in which he retained an active interest up to the time of his last illness.

He served as the first secretary of the Board of Directors of the Hospital, having been appointed at the first meeting of the Board, February 3, 1902, and in this capacity took an active part in the work of the hospital management for almost 14 years. He relinquished the office January 3, 1912, when the duties were taken over by the late J.T. Whitlock. He also served for many years as secretary of the Board of Trustees of which he was a member retaining this position up to the time of his death.

His interest in educational matters found practical expression in the service which he rendered as secretary of the Board of School Trustees of St. Stephen, holding this position from March 1, 1903, to January 21, 1926.

Friends and co-workers from all walks of life assembled at Christ Church at 8 o'clock yesterday morning to pay their last tribute to his life and work. The simple and impressive service was conducted by the rector Rev. E. Hallstone, assisted by Rev. P.G. Crofton, rector of St. Anne's Church, Calais, who read the lessons. The choir of the church was present at the service. The pallbearers, all Masons, were A.M. Hiltz, R.W. Grimmer, Oliver Ormrod, W.C. Poole, A.A. Laflin, and M.W. McCoomb. Interment was made in the Rural Cemetery.

Those attending the funeral from out of town were Archdeacon Vroom, a brother of King's College, Halifax, and a nephew Carl Vroom of Halifax. Members of the Town Council attended in a body.



