

Author: History of Grundy County, 1914

Merriam, William Richardson (deceased) – The records of Grundy County show that many of its substantial citizens gained their competence from farming. Later on in life many of these men retired from the farm, and coming to the County Seat, passed their declining years in peace and comfort. The late William Richardson Merriam, after a somewhat eventful life, located on a farm in Wauponsee Township and lived there until his retirement. He was born in Jefferson County, N. Y., November 29, 1829, a son of Archibald and Polly (Bohall) Merriam, natives of New York. The father died in 1835.

When he was nineteen years old, William Richardson Merriam learned the trade of cabinetmaking and painting, and in 1848, came west to Somonauk, Ill. Later he obtained employment on a farm by the month, and after a year, went to Joliet, Ill., where he worked on the Illinois and Michigan Canal as bowsman. Within eighteen months he was made steersman of a freight boat which was consigned to John B. Chapin & Co., of Chicago. Mr. Merriam entered the employ of this firm, and after seven years became owner of a boat called William Merriam. Two years later, he sold a half interest, and two years after that, disposed of his other half. In 1861, he bought eighty acres of land in Wauponsee Township, and operated it until 1884, when he retired. In the meanwhile, he had added to his holdings until he owned 280 acres. Retiring from the farm in 1884, he came to Morris and bought a handsome residence on East Washington street, where he died, September 8, 1901.

On March 26, 1854, Mr. Merriam was married at Saratoga, Ill., to Rubie S. Lyons, born in Jefferson County, N. Y., October 30, 1836, a daughter of Vernon and Maria (Taylor) Lyons, natives of New York State. The family moved to Kendall County, Ill., in 1847, locating six miles east of Lisbon, and in 1857, came to Morris, where Mr. Lyons died August 27, 1872, aged sixty-three years. His wife died December 1, 1885. Mr. and Mrs. Merriam had no issue. Mr. Merriam was a Methodist, and in politics, was a Republican, although he never cared for public office. Since the death of her husband, Mrs. Merriam has lived at her residence, generally alone. She is a most estimable lady, and enjoys universal respect, as did her husband during his life.