

MARQUIS-Book of Chicagoans - 3rd ed. cl917 - p. 727

WILDER, THOMAS EDWARD, tanner; b. Lancaster, Mass., August 15, 1855; s/of Charles Lewis and Harriet Ellen (Harris) Wilder; descended from Thomas Wilder, Lancaster, Mass., 1640: prep. edn. Lancaster Acad; M.E., Worcester (Mass) Poly. Inst.;, 1874: m. Anna G., daughter William F. Tucker of Chicago, Sept. 3, 1880; children: Marjorie 9 Mrs. Wm.H. Emery, Edward Tucker, Erskine Phelps, Harold, Paul, Harris Emory. Taught school 1874-5; came to Chicago, 1875, as clerk with Walker, Oakley & co; started in commercial leather business, 1878, and in 1879 became member Johnson & Wilder, mfrs. of cut soles, etc; firm of Wilder & Hale succeeded 1880, changing in 1887 to the present style of Wilder & co., of which sr. mem. and pres. since incorporation, Dec. 31, 1906; vice-pres. Wilder Tanning Co. of Waukegan, Ill; chairman board of mgrs. J.W. & A.P. Howard Co., Ltd., Corry, Pa; dir. Conselman & co. investment bankers. One of the organizers of Chicago Ass'n of Commerce, of which was mem. bd. of dirs. and mem. exec. com. and ways and means com., also ex-chmn. publicity com. and ex-gen sec. Ex-chmn. Waterway Com., ex-vice pres. Nat. Congress of Rivers and Harbors for State of Ill. (now dir.) ; chmn. Am. delegation 6th International Congress of Chambers of Commerce, Paris, 1914; mem. National Conservation Congress. Trustee Worcester Poly. Inst. since 1907. Vice-pres. Chicago Band Assn dir. Infant Welfare Soc. Republican, Unitarian, Ex-pres. Mass. Soc.; ex-pres. New England Soc. Clubs, Union League, University, Aero (vice-pres.), Chicago Golf, Elmhurst Golf (ex-pres) Cross Country Saddle and Bridle (vice-pres.). Interested in philanthropic and civic work. Recreations: golf, horseback riding, flowers. Home: Elmhurst, Ill. Office: 226 W. Lake St., Chicago.

THOMAS EDWARD WILDER.

The worth of a man to his community is largely measured by his constructive citizenship, whether his efforts be directed along public or private avenues of activity. The man who builds up a large industry, thus affording employment to many, is as valuable to his locality as the statesman who safeguards its rights. The late Thomas Edward Wilder of Chicago and Elmhurst, was one of the men who not only made a name for himself in business circles, but also found time to lead others in promoting public improvements. He was born at Lancaster, Mass., August 15, 1855, a son of Charles Lewis and Harriet Ellen (Harris) Wilder. After at-

tending the schools of Lancaster, he became a student of the academy of that place, completing his educational training at the Worcester, Mass., Polytechnic Institute, from which he was graduated with the degree of M. E.

Coming to Chicago, Mr. Wilder was united in marriage in 1880 with Anna Gage Tucker, a daughter of William F. Tucker, and they became the parents of the following children: Marjorie, who is Mrs. William H. Emery; Edward Tucker; Erskine Phelps; Harold; Paul and Harris Emory.

After completing his educational training Mr. Wilder entered the educational field and for a

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year was engaged in teaching school, but left the east for Chicago in 1875, and became a clerk with the firm of Walker, Oakley & Company, in that capacity learning the fundamentals of business life in a practical manner. In 1878 he organized the firm of Johnson & Wilder, leather commission merchants and manufacturers of cut soles and similar articles. This firm was succeeded in 1880 by Wilder & Hale, and became Wilder & Company in 1887, of which Mr. Wilder was the senior member, his associate being his brother, John E. Wilder. As the business expanded it was deemed expedient to incorporate it, and the necessary preliminaries were carried out, and papers of incorporation secured on December 31, 1900, with Mr. Wilder as president and his brother as vice president. Mr. Wilder was also vice president of the Wilder-Manning Tanning Company of Waukegan, Ill., and chairman of its board of directors; and vice president of the J. W. and A. P. Howard Company, Ltd., of Corry, Pa., giving to the affairs of all these concerns a painstaking and efficient attention that had a strong effect on their growth.

Outside of his business relations, Mr. Wilder took a deep and effective interest in public affairs, and was one of the organizers of the Chicago Chamber of Commerce, and served for years on its board of directors, and also as a director of the National Chamber of Commerce. His practical mind early foresaw the importance of the deep waterways plan, and he gave the project some of his best efforts, serving on

the executive committee, the ways and means committee, as chairman of the publicity committee, and secretary and chairman of the Lakes to the Gulf Deep Waterway Commission; and was vice president of the National Congress of Rivers & Harbors for the State of Illinois, and through his energy the public was enlightened as to the benefits which would accrue from such development as was proposed. Mr. Wilder was a member of the International Business Congress and the National Conservation Congress. His old educational institution recognizing his importance, honored him by placing him upon its board of trustees in 1907. Always a strong Republican he exemplified in his politics the highest ideals of his party. Christ Church of Elmhurst had in him a loyal member and generous supporter. His social connections were with the Massachusetts Society, which he at one time served as president, the New England Society, the Union League Club, and Aero Club, of which he was a director, the Elmhurst Golf Club, of which he was at one time president, and the University Club, and was active in all of these organizations. For a number of years he maintained his home at Elmhurst, where his extensive grounds gave him opportunity to indulge his love of flowers. Here he died August 22, 1919. Mr. Wilder was essentially engrossed in his family circle, and in his home, surrounded by his wife and children he found his greatest happiness.



S. J. P. W. W. W. W.

History Contestant Names Wilder Family's Snapshot

by Jean Van Rensselaar

The winner of the March 14 Trace This Place Contest is Raymond H. Steben Sr., 246 Illinois St., Elmhurst.

Special thanks to the other entrant: Frank J. Kolar Sr.

The March 14 contest photo depicted an eight-member family standing in front of a porch. Steben's entry reads as follows:

"The T.E. Wilders had been living in the Challacombe House for 10 years, and in 1906 they purchased the Wadham-King Estate.

"The Challacombe House was located on the northwest corner of Prospect Street and Elm Park Avenue. Today the site is the Elmhurst College Science Building. T.E. Wilder, (August 15, 1853-August 22, 1919) was born in Lan-

caster, Mass., educated at Lancaster Academy and Worcester Institute.

"Wilder came to Chicago in 1878 and began a leather business, which became the Chicago Rawhide Co. He served as president of the Elmhurst School Board and president of the Elmhurst Golf Club.

"The clubhouse was on the northeast corner of Elm Park Avenue and Grace Street. The nine-hole course covered the area which today is York High School. In 1908, Wilder was secretary of the Chicago Association of Commerce and also director of the Great Lakes District of the National Rivers and Harbors Congress.

"It was during 1915 that the photograph pictured in the Elmhurst issue of March 14 was taken on the front steps of the Wilder

home. Those is the picture are T.E. Wilder and Mrs. Wilder, Harold, Anna Emery Hanson, Marjorie Wilder Emery, Edward Emery Sr. and Harris Wilder (also William H. Emery Jr.).

"Wilder's will bequeathed the north six acres to the city of Elmhurst provided that a library be built at a cost of \$35,000. The city accepted, but for a lack of funds to build the library, the property was returned.

"The Elmhurst Park Board was organized in 1920 and negotiated for the entire estate, which was acquired and became Wilder Park. The Park Board offered the residence for use as a library and the Library Board purchased the building and one acre of land."

3/28/86

T. E. WILDER