

OBITUARY.

Gen. R. K. Swift.

Gen. R. K. Swift, one of Chicago's early and respected settlers died at his home in Lawrence County, Missouri, Friday, Sept. 28, in the 70th year of his age.

Richard Kollogg Swift was the second of three sons of Jarvis and Jerusha Swift, and was born in Owaseo, Cayuga County, N. Y., Aug. 28, 1813. Mr. Swift came to Chicago in 1835 but returned to New York for his family shortly after. He came again in 1839 and opened a pawnbroker's office at the north-west corner of Dearborn and Lake streets. He afterward started a banking business in the Saloon Building at the corner of Lake and Clark under the name of Swift Bros. When the Metropolitan Block, corner of La Salle and Randolph, was built the first floor was arranged for banking business, and was occupied by Mr. Swift, the firm name being Swift Bros. & Johnson. Mr. R. K. Swift, who was at the head of the firm, developed a financial tact which gave him an extensive reputation. A branch of the bank was started in New York under the name of Swift Bros. & Itansom. Mr. Swift was the first to introduce a system of foreign exchange here, and at one time could give letters of credit on almost any civilized city or country on the globe, and his list of foreign exchange correspondents numbered several hundred. One of his pet theories was to span the earth with exchange.

His ingenuity to further his business and protect his patrons can be illustrated by the following incident: An Irishman who was unable to write got a bill of exchange on Ireland, and, thinking he might have some trouble in being identified, he asked Mr. Swift's advice. Mr. Swift had a large placard written and pinned to his own breast and took the man to the photograph gallery and had their pictures taken together. The placard read as follows: "This is to certify that the man on my right is Barney Murphy and is entitled to the face of the draft which he will present." Armed with the picture Mr. Murphy had no trouble in getting his money, a statement of the facts having been sent on before him.

In 1835 Mr. Swift visited Ireland in company with Dr. Egan and was instrumental in aiding a large number of Irish boys and girls to emigrate to this country. He became involved in the financial crisis of 1857 and was obliged to close his bank in October, 1858.

He resided first on Wabash avenue and afterwards on Michigan avenue between Lake and Randolph. About 1850 he built a handsome residence on Michigan avenue, near Van Buren street, where he lived till the breaking out of the War.

Mr. Swift's military career commenced with his organizing a company of hussars. He afterwards commanded an artillery company, which was known as Swift's Artillery; this was merged into the Chicago Light Artillery. James Steel, who is now living in Chicago, was one of the officers of the first company. Mr. Swift was Brigadier-General of Militia, and was in command of the troops during the Lager-Beer riots under Mayor Boone's administration, in 1856. Col. Ellsworth was aided by Gen. Swift in his efforts to organize a military company, and his successful trips through the Eastern cities were planned at Gen. Swift's residence.

On the breaking out of the War Gen. Swift took command of the first troops to leave Chicago, and was in command at Cairo until relieved by Gen. Prentice.

Mr. Swift is the father of the trust-deed system which is now in general use. After the War he went into the tax-buying business with D. G. Hamilton. He went to the Legislature and lobbied through several charters, which he afterwards sold, one being taken by the Fidelity Savings Bank. His health failing he determined to go west to Colorado. He sold out his tax business and in November after the Chicago fire he went to Colorado, where he resided until two years ago, when his family moved to south-western Missouri. For the last six years he has been partially paralyzed, and has been almost entirely helpless, his wife ministering to his wants with untiring care.

Mr. Swift in his prosperous days was generous to a fault, his charities were frequent and unostentatious, and many whom he befriended never knew where their assistance came from; and after his failure in business he would frequently divide or give his last dollar to help some case of distress, or some unbefriended boy or girl. Mr. Swift was something of an inventor, and had experimented with electricity before Prof. Morse's discovery, and found that sound could be transmitted by electricity. He had a battery and apparatus in his house, and experimented evenings. About the time of his failure he was working on a number of public improvements for his adopted city, among which was a system of public baths and closets which he desired to have put in conventual places through the heart of the city.

Mr. Swift leaves a wife and three daughters, two of whom are married—Mrs. George Wheeler, living in Kosita, Col., and Mrs. W. H. Christian, who resides in this city. A number of prosperous citizens of Chicago at the present day were clerks in R. K. Swift's bank.