

# Virgil G. Preston, Pioneer Grinnell Merchant Passes Away Sunday

H-R 12-20-54

Virgil Grant Preston, dean of the Grinnell Business Fraternity, died Sunday afternoon in a local hospital. His last serious illness had continued for a period of three weeks but for several years he had been in retirement as a result of failing health. He had passed his eighty-fifth birthday on Sept. 29, and had spent almost his entire lifetime in this community.

## Funeral Tuesday

Funeral services will be held at 2 p.m. Tuesday at the Smith funeral home in charge of Mr. Preston's pastor, Rev. Leland W. Mann of the Congregational church. Interment will be in Hazelwood cemetery.



Virgil G. Preston

Surviving are Mr. Preston's wife, two children, Selma (Mrs. Carroll Dickerson) of Des Moines and Stanley Preston of Grinnell, two grandchildren, James Preston Dickerson of San Francisco, Calif., and Stanley Davis Preston of Grinnell, a twin sister, Mrs. Charles Rapson of Los Angeles, Calif., and two brothers, Frederick A. Preston of Saugus, Calif., and George W. Preston of Avoca.

## Started Business in 1869

The connection of the Preston family with Grinnell business began in 1869 when Virgil's father, Sylvester S. Preston, opened a general merchandise store here. A native of Vermont, the elder Preston had given up a surveying job on the Mississippi river to enter the business field. For a time he combined his store activities with farming in Jasper county and on this farm Virgil Preston was born on September 29, 1869. He grew to manhood here and attended Grinnell schools, graduating from Grinnell high school.

For a short time he was located in Garner, where he managed the clothing department in a general store. In 1897, after his father had retired from active business, Virgil opened the Preston clothing store in Grinnell, now occupied by the Sanders variety store. One year later the business was moved to its present location at the northeast corner of Fourth avenue and Main street, which for years has been familiarly known as "the Preston corner."

Over the years the business prospered. Mr. Preston sold honest merchandise and his genial personality attracted customers.

## Married 58 Years

On October 10, 1896, Virgil G. Preston was united in marriage with Darline Davis, daughter of H. I. Davis, one of Grinnell's early pioneers and a prominent and active citizen. Their happy wedded life was featured by their golden wedding in 1946, when friends by the hundreds came to the Pres-

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ton home to do them honor. Stanley Preston, Virgil's son, now continues the tradition of the Preston name. Stanley started working full time in the store in 1927 and took over the ownership in 1938 but his father continued active in the business and was in the store every day to meet his friends until his definite retirement in 1942.

## On School Board

V. G. Preston was a member of the Congregational church and of the Elks lodge. For many years he was an active member of the Knights of Pythias. For a number of years he was a member of the Grinnell school board and served one year as its president. He also has come down to fame as a member of the state championship E. W. Clark hose team.

His long business career was marked by integrity and enterprise. He was a man who made friends readily and held them and his passing removes one of the links which united the Grinnell of today with the past.