

# Who's Who In Wisconsin Rapids

The Who's Who column will be run each Saturday in the Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune. It will include a brief sketch of the life of citizens who have helped make history for Wisconsin Rapids.

## Isaac Phelps Witter

Out of our dreams and visions of the future we all establish our lives, and follow our own precepts, be they good or bad. We are all builders, either on the solid rocks of life's foundation or in the shallow sands of time. We shape our future from the date we are old enough to consider what occupation we will choose in our journey through life.

Classed among the solid builders, is the subject of our sketch, Isaac Phelps Witter, only son of Mr. and Mrs. Jere Delos Witter. He was born in Wisconsin Rapids May 11, 1873, in the house on Third Street South directly opposite the Lacy Horton home.

### Has Lived Here Long

When he was two years old, he moved with his parents to their new home on the same street, a few blocks west, which was among the most palatial residences in this city at that time. Upon the death of his father, the property reverted to the son, who later removed the old homestead and built the handsome structure he now occupies as a family residence.

### Learned Banking Here

Mr. Witter attended the Howe High School from which he graduated in June 1891 under W. H. Luehr. During the following year he worked in the Bank of Grand Rapids, under the tutelage of his father, the pioneer banker of Wisconsin Rapids.

In 1892 Mr. Witter entered the University of Wisconsin at Madison, taking the civic history course. While at the University, the Theta Delta Chi fraternity was organized and he was one of its charter members. He was also an active member of the Philomathian Debating Society, one of the prominent debating societies of the university.

### Studied in Europe

After spending three years in Madison, he was given the choice of either finishing the course at the university or spending one year in Europe. Choosing the latter, he traveled extensively through Italy, France and England, returning to Berlin where he studied in one of the academies for six months, specializing in German and Finance.

In 1899 he again entered the Bank of Grand Rapids acting as teller and the following year was elected vice president. His father died in 1902 and a large responsibility fell on his



ISAAC PHELPS WITTER

shoulders. At the time of the father's death, the Consolidated Water Power & Paper company was still undeveloped although he had a large share of responsibility in it.

### Follows Father's Plans

It has been the great desire of the son to carry out in full his father's intentions and this work of further development has been carried on through the untiring efforts of Mr. Witter and his brother-in-law George W. Mead. Today the Consolidated Water Power & Paper Company ranks among the foremost paper manufacturing concerns.

Along with this development came the building of the Grand Rapids Milling Company, now the Jackson Milling Company which is one of the substantial industries of the city. Mr. Witter was elected president of the company and continues to serve in that capacity.

### Became Board Member

In 1900 Mr. Witter was elected a member of the school board, taking his father's place, when he resigned. During his service with the board the Edison School on the west side was built, and it was largely through his efforts that the sum bequeathed by his father to the Board of Education was used for the erection of the Witter manual training school building.

He resigned from the board when he was elected State Senator from the twenty-fourth district, feeling he could not do justice to both positions. He has been a member of the library board for the past twenty-one years and has acted as its treasurer during all that time. He has interested himself particularly in the J. D. Witter Travelling Libraries which was the first county library system in the state of Wisconsin, the success of which was an ambition of his.

### Assists Library

From the few original libraries, the number increased to 45 cases. Mr. Witter has always felt it his duty to keep alive every interest which was left him by his father, fully believing that in the building up of these industries, the community has benefited thereby.

He is the president of the Johnson & Hill Company department store, one of the largest department stores in the state, and is also one of the directors of the Ahdawagam Paper Products Co.

### Heads First National

Mr. Witter was a strong advocate of the merging of the First National Bank and the Bank of Grand Rapids, and upon the completion of the merger, was elected its president. While he has been interested in many things, the greater part of his life has been largely devoted to banking business, being connected with the Bank of Grand Rapids for many years. He was also one of the board of directors of the First National Bank, previous to the merger. The new bank building on Grand avenue in which the merged banks moved October 6, 1921,

is one of the most magnificent buildings in this city and stands as a monument of great things accomplished.

### Elected Senator in 1916

At the November election of 1916, Mr. Witter was elected by a big majority to the State Senate on the republican ticket. His opponent was R. W. Monk of Neillsville. During the first two years in the senate he served as a member of the corporation's committee.

### Held High Honors

The following two years he was elected chairman of the committee of committees, an honor second only to the presidency of the senate. He was at this time offered the chairmanship of the corporations committee, one of the major committees, which he did not accept, but did accept the chairmanship of the drainage committee, which was a special committee to consider the drainage laws of the state.

Through this committee, two more important drainage laws were enacted, the general drainage law and the farm drainage law. Mr. Witter felt he should be active in this work as so much land in Wood county was effected by this law. He is a member of the advisory board of Wisconsin Lakes and Parks Association. He is a 32nd degree Mason, an Elk and a Rotarian and also a member of the Chamber of Commerce.

### Loyal American Citizen

In religious faith, he is an Episcopalian, and is Junior Warden and treasurer of St. John's Episcopal church in which both he and his wife are earnest workers.

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On June 27, 1900, Isaac Phelps Witter was united in marriage to Miss Charlotte Livingstone Gibson of Des Moines, a former Wisconsin Rapids girl. They have one child, a son, Jere Delos.

Mr. Witter is broadminded, charitable, loyal to his friends and kind to all his acquaintances. His generosity is always proven by his many charitable deeds, and he has proven himself to be a solid builder in the steady march of progress of Wisconsin Rapids.