

# 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.

## John Richard Ragan



JOHN RICHARD RAGAN

"Nothing succeeds like success" is an oft repeated saying, and to reach its goal means grit, energy, endurance and hard work, and although the combination is strenuous, yet when one reaches the top rung he feels his efforts have not been in vain. We have many residents in this city who enjoy the full meaning of the saying, and among whom is included our worthy townsman, John R. Ragan.

John Richard Ragan was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Ragan, who emigrated from the County of Cork, Ireland, to the United States in the year 1949, crossing the seas in a sailing vessel. It took six weeks from the time they left the land of the shamrock until they landed in New York City.

During the voyage there was sickness aboard the vessel, and Mrs. Ragan fearing her son Patrick, who was one of her two children, might share the fate of some of the other emigrants, and be thrown overboard into the sea, hid him in her trunk. While the journey was not one of comfort, it at least insured safety.

### Born In Iowa

The Ragan family continued their journey from New York City to Syracuse where they resided for a time and later moved to Farley, Iowa, where their son, John, was born November 16, 1862, and where he attended the country school until twelve years of age. He then accompanied his father to Lake Chetek, Wis. The journey was made in a lumber wagon drawn by two heavy work horses which brought them to their destination after a hard and tiresome journey of nine days.

Mr. Ragan's father entered a homestead claim at Moose Ear Creek near Lake Chetek. The land was also near the home of Mr. Ragan's daughter, Mrs. H. J. Dixon with whom the father and son resided for three years. At the end of that time Mrs. Ragan and her seven children joined her husband and son John at Chippewa Falls where they settled for a time.

During the winter months John attended the public school and worked at various occupations during the summer months.

His grandparents had not been in sufficient financial circumstances to pay for the education of their children, and the parents, realizing its necessity, deprived themselves of many necessities that their sons and daughters might gain what they had lost. Mr. Ragan believes that the children of today do not realize the great benefits they have in the splendid free schools.

### Finished High School

Mr. Ragan's first work in Chippewa Falls was as a chore boy for two seasons for John Rumsey. His wages were ten dollars per month, including board and room. At the end of the two seasons he worked for the Chippewa Lumber Boom Co. during vacation time, and finished his high school education at the age of seventeen years.

He next entered the employ of the W. T. Dalton company, general merchandise branch store at Cadot, and remained with them for three years when the company retired from business and were succeeded by Mr. Ragan and his brother, Michael, who started with a capital of \$1500 and continued in the same line of business for ten years.

### Bought Hurley Business

In the spring of 1887 Mr. Ragan went to Hurley, intending to establish a branch store, but on his arrival found all lines of merchandise greatly overdone with the exception of the furniture and undertaking business. There was only one store of the kind in the city, which was owned by J. C. Porter who was offering the stock for sale.

Although Mr. Ragan had no experience whatever in this line, he considered it a good investment and he and his brother Michael purchased the business and conducted both the Cadot and Hurley stores, John R. Ragan

moving his family to Hurley to conduct the store at that city.

### Moved To Rapids

At the end of ten years, and upon the death of his brother, Mr. Ragan and family moved to Milwaukee with the view of locating and engaging in business in that city. During their stay there Mrs. Ragan came to Wisconsin Rapids to receive medical treatment and later Mr. Ragan came here to visit her. Both were so favorably impressed with the city and its people that they decided to make their future home here and on May 15, 1903 Mr. Ragan purchased the furniture and undertaking store of George W. Baker and Son located on Second street north and remained in the same place for four years, after which he moved his stock to the Spafford & Cole building which is now occupied by the National Guard.

The business increased so greatly that the building became too small to hold his stock and on July 1, 1919 he moved his stock of furniture into the J. A. Cohen building on First street north, and his undertaking business to the building of Mrs. J. B. Arpin directly opposite, where he still continues both lines.

### Active In Association

During his business career as an undertaker, Mr. Ragan has buried over 3,500 people. During the year 1908, he served as president of the Wisconsin Funeral Directors Association. Later he served two years as a member of the State Embalmer's Examining Board and is a member of the Legislative Board of the Association.

He has attended nearly every national convention of the association since he came to this city, and at the last one, held October 12 to 14, 1921, at San Antonio, Texas, was appointed a member of the National Funeral Directors Association for 1921 and 1922.

### Served On School Board

Mr. Ragan is a member of St. Peter & Paul's Catholic Church of this city, a member of the Catholic Knights of Wisconsin, a member of the Catholic Order of Foresters, a member of the B. P. O. E., the order of Eagles, the Modern Woodmen of America, and the E. F. U.

He has served eight years as a member of the Board of Education, during which time the Edison school building was built. He is a member of the Swimming Pool Association, is a Rotarian and a member of the Chamber of Commerce. He has served for the past eighteen years as secretary of the Calvary Cemetery Association.

On December 27, 1898, John Richard Ragan and Miss Anna Hinterthuer were united in marriage at St. Patrick's Catholic church in Neenah at a High Nuptial Mass, read by Rev. William DeKalver, a former pastor of the local Catholic church.

Three children have been born to them, two daughters and one son, two of whom are still living. The eldest, a daughter died in infancy. His son, Fred, is associated with him in the Furniture and Undertaking business, and his daughter, Marguerite, is a member of the High School faculty at Iron Mountain, Mich., where she teaches dramatic art.

Mr. Ragan enjoys not only a large acquaintance in this city, but is well and favorably known by many people throughout the United States. He is a man not only of keen business judgment, but is alive to the business interests, welfare, and improvement of Wisconsin Rapids and is always willing to be of assistance with both money and work to aid in every way.