

CLASS OF 1834

ALEXANDER F. BELL.

Hon. Alexander F. Bell, who has for three years been confined to his home from an attack of paralysis, which affected his brain as well as his body, died at the home of his son-in-law, S. B. Gorham, in Ionia, at 2:30 o'clock, March 12, 1896. For forty-eight hours he had been in extremis, and he passed away as quietly and painlessly as if going to sleep. Alexander F. Bell was born August 5, 1812, in Charlton, Saratoga county, New York, of Scotch parentage. He graduated from Union College in 1836, and came to Michigan the same year, arriving at Jackson in August. From Jackson he, in company with the late Adam L. Roof, took a boat and floated down Grand River till he reached Lyons, then a village of three log houses. They camped over night, the third night out, in an unbroken wilderness where ~~now~~ is now the capitol of the State. They also camped over night in Portland, a village of four log houses. Pleased with the picturesque appearance of the country around Lyons the two adventurers concluded to settle there. Mr. Roof was already a lawyer. He started a law office and Mr. Bell became his student. In 1839 he married Miss Elizabeth Boyer, of Portland. In 1840 he was admitted to the bar and the same year removed to the county seat, Ionia, where he has resided for 56 years, except for a short residence in Grand Rapids in 1847, and in Detroit in 1859-60. In 1846 he was elected as a democrat to the State Legislature, and in 1853 was appointed by President Pierce register of the United States Land Office. He was the first president of the village of Ionia, being elected on a non-partisan ticket. As a lawyer Mr. Bell always stood at the head of his profession in this part of the State, particularly as a counsellor in civil cases. Indeed his ability was in the early days recognized throughout the State and there were few important cases hereabouts in which he was not employed on one side or the other. He narrowly escaped being a member of the supreme court, and he would have brought to that distinguished tribunal a well-trained mind, and a keen power of analysis, rarely equalled. It was, however, as a citizen, a neighbor and a friend that he will be best remembered. No man has rendered greater services to the town in which he lived and has less left in the way of worldly possessions to show for it. In all enterprises for the building up of Ionia and promoting its growth and prosperity he was a leading and influential spirit. He was a particularly potent ~~spirit~~ factor in the work of bringing railroads into the town and so managing it as to derive the greatest good to the community to whose interests he was devotedly attached. He was one of the original founders of the Presbyterian church here and always a faithful, earnest and loyal supporter of that society. As a neighbor he was generous and sympathetic, in his family he was indulgent and kind. Few husbands and fathers could recall the incidents of so long a domestic life and find so little to regret. Faultless he was not, as it is human to err, but

CLASS OF 1834--Alexander F. Bell---2

his faults were of the kind that are easily forgotten and forgiven, and his virtues and rare good traits were immeasurably greater. Mr. Bell was a man of commanding personality. Of iron frame and unusual powers of endurance he was easily a leader among the hardy pioneers who willingly faced hardships and privations. He was a genial companion, a warm friend, a sturdy enemy, a loving father and a devoted husband. Witty, well-read with a mind disciplined by study and experience, he was a man whom it was always a pleasure to meet. There was a charm about his conversation and an unaffected simplicity in his manners that it was hard to resist. Mrs. Bell died some years since. Of the seven children born to their union, only two survive, viz., Mrs. Seymour B. Gorham and Mrs. J. C. Jennings, both of Ionia. Appropriate resolutions were adopted by the Ionia county bar.

Michigan Pioneers and Historical Society
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1897.

CLASS OF 1834

ALEXANDER F. BELL

Representative from Ionia County, 1847. Was born in Charlton, Saratoga County, N. Y., Aug. 5, 1812, and was of Scotch descent. He graduated from Union College in 1836^(?) and the same year came to Lyons, Mich., with Adam L. Roof, with whom he studied law. He was admitted in 1840, and removed to Ionia, where he was engaged in practice. He was first President of Ionia village. From 1853 to 1857 he was register of the United States Land Office at Ionia. He was a prominent lawyer, and for many years was a recognized leader in the Democratic party. He was interested in railroads and other improvements. He died at Ionia, Mar. 12, 1896.

FROM MICHIGAN BIOGRAPHIES
MICHIGAN HISTORICAL COMMISSION
LANSING, 1924.

Bell, Alex. F. 4/13/1835
"...I will venture to rank...among the scum of the community. A pretty hard case...a course, vulgar, wicked fellow, and a breeder of mischief. ...I fear vice will bring him speedily to the grave. I recollect that in 1833 when the pious of college were a little refreshed by a special manifestation of the spirit, Bell was deeply convicted for his sins and in public meeting asked Christians to pray for him..however he fell away.
Pearson Diaries V.2,p.95

Bell, A.F. 1834
Pearson Diaries V.4,p.725

ap. 26, 1855

1834

Gonia McKean April 20th /55

Jonathan Pison Esq
Dear Sir

In compliance with your circular of blank date I would state that my name is Alexander Ferguson Bell - My Father's name was James Bell, My Mother's Annie Bell, I was born Aug 3rd 1812 in West Charlton Saratoga Co New York. In 1830 & 31 prepared for college at Johnstown Academy - the Rev Mr Morgan Principal - Entered Sophomore class Union College in Sept 1831 - remained one year, In Sept 1832 went to Alabama - was a teacher in Goundesborough Academy five months - returned home in summer of 1833 - reentered Union College in Sept 1833 and remained until fall of 1834 - Went to Lawrenceville New Jersey in Spring of 1835 - was a teacher in Lawrenceville High School the Rev^d A N Phillips Principal one year - In Spring of 1836 went to Canajoharie Montgomery Co N.Y and entered the office of David Eacker as a law student - In August 1836 came to this place - done some surveying &

pettifoggery for a living - was admitted to the
bar in 1840 - was ^{unsuccessful} ~~was~~ candidate for the Michigan
Legislature in 1839 - was elected in 1846 to the
lower House of Michigan Legislature - Was ~~was~~
an unsuccessful candidate for the same place
in 1849 - was unsuccessful candidate for
Circuit Judge of the 8th district in Michigan
in 1851 - In 1853 was appointed Register
of the United States Land office at Ionia
Michigan which office I now hold

In 1836 commenced the free use of ardent spirits
- drank very freely until 1844 at which time was
what we would call a drunkard - drank in
the years 1844 - 1845 - 1846 & 1847 liquor only as a
medicine - seldom found myself sober during the
last two years (1846 & 1847) - In 1848 dispensed with
the use of intoxicating drinks of every kind from
small beer upwards, as a beverage or medicine, and
have not used any since - not the least - Enjoy
good health now - am comfortably situated
and would be pleased to be by your remembrance
to Professors Brandfit & Jackson

Yours Alex F Bell

34
1836

ALEXANDER F. BELL:

(1)

(Mich.Pioneer)

Hon. Alexander F. Bell, who has been for three years confined to his home from an attack of paralysis, which affected his brain as well as his body, died at the home of his son-in-law, S.B. Gorham, in Ionia, at 2:30 o'clock, March 12, 1896. For 48 hours he had been in extremis, and he passed away as quietly and painlessly as if going to sleep.

Alexander F. Bell was born August 5, 1812, in Charlton, Saratoga Co., N.Y., of Scotch parentage. He graduated from Union College in 1836, and came to Michigan, the same year, arriving in Jackson in August. From Jackson he, in company with the late Adam L. Roof, took a boat and floated down Grand River till he reached Lyons, than a village of 33 log houses. They camped over night, the 3rd night out, in an unbroken wilderness where is now the capitol of the State. They also camped over night in Portland, a village of four log houses. Pleased with the picturesque appearance of the country around Lyons the two adventurers concluded to settle there. Mr. Roof was already a lawyer. He started a law office and Mr. Bell became his student. In 1839 he married Miss Elizabeth Boyer, of Portland. In 1840 he was admitted to the bar and the same year removed to the county seat, where he has resided for 56 years, except for a short residence in Grand Rapids in 1847, and in Detroit in 1859-60. In 1846 he was elected as a Democrat to the State Legislature, and in 1853 was appointed by President Pierce register of the United States Land Office. He was the first president of the village of Ionia, being elected on a non-partisan ticket. As a lawyer Mr. Bell always stood at the head of his profession in this part of the State, particularly as a counsellor in civil cases. Indeed his ability was in the early days recognized throughout the State and there were few important cases hereabouts in which he was not employed on one side or the other. He narrowly escaped being a member of the Supreme Court, and he would have brought to that distinguished tribunal a well-trained mind, and a keen power of analysis, rarely equalled. It was, however, as a citizen, a neighbor, and a friend that he will be best remembered. No man has rendered greater services to the town in which he lived and has less left in worldly possessions to show for it. In all enterprises for the building up of Ionia and promoting its growth and prosperity he was a leading and influential spirit. He was a particularly potent factor in the work of bringing railroads into the town and so managing it as to derive the greatest good to the community to whose interests he was devotedly attached. He was one of the original founders of the Presbyterian Church here and always a faithful, earnest and loyal supporter of that society. As a neighbor he was generous and sympathetic, in his family he was indulgent and kind. Few husbands and fathers could recall the incidents of so long a domestic life and find so little to regret. Faultless he

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Historical Collections
Collections & Researches
Michigan Pioneer & Historical Society
Vol. XXVII p. 96
1897.

Defeated for Mayor of Ionia in 1880 by Erastus H. Stanton. Vol. 9, p. 46

Appointed member of committee from the House to locate the capital. Vol. 8. p. 123

Ionia's first representative, after it had gained a separate existence, as a county, was the Hon. A. F. Bell. Vol. 3 p, 475

Among the most conspicuous of the houses in Ionia is that of A. F. Bell. Vol. 26 p. 96

An appropriation from an early legislature having been secured the avails of which were used in cutting out the Grand river road west of Lansing, the Hon. A.F.Bell, of Ionia, being chosen commissioner. This proved a lasting benefit to the citizens of the Grand River Valley. Vol. 18,p345

The first duel in the county(Ionia) was never fought. A Dr. Beckwith was offended by A.F.Bell, the lawyer, and challenged him to mortal combat. Bell promptly accepted; chose for weapons potatoes, and for the ground opposite sides of the Grand River; firing to be kept up, ~~and~~ until honor was satisfied. The doctor thought the terms ungentlemanly and declined to fight under them; so the duel ~~was~~ never came off and has had no successor. Vol. 3 p. 474

DIED:-Mrs Elizabeth Bell, wife of the Hon. A. F. Bell-- born in Philadelphia, August 19, 1823; she died at Ionia July 11, 1886. Vol. 2 p. 46

Daughter of Joshua and Rebecca (Coleman) Boyer. Was graduated from the Bethlehem Seminary, Reading. Her parents came to Michigan with Gov. Porter and settled in Detroit. In 1838 Mr. Boyer moved to Portland, in Ionia county, where Elizabeth was married a year later, at the age of sixteen, to Alexander F. Bell, then a rising young lawyer. Mr. & Mrs. Bell lived in Lyons one year and came to Ionia in 1840, where their home has been most of the time since. She was a member of the Episcopal church. Vol. 11 p. 51

Source:Michigan Pioneer & Historical Society

Alexander Ferguson Bell 1834

Alexander Ferguson Bell ¹⁸³⁴