

Local Affairs.

The Late Joseph Richardson.

MARCUS C. HAWLEY WRITES CONCERNING HIM IN THE NEW YORK TIMES.

I have been waiting for fully six months to see if some friends of the late Joseph Richardson would not make some reply to the sensational articles that have frequently appeared in the "yellow journals" touching the "Spite House" and other exaggerations.

Now, first as to the "Spite House." I am prepared to state that this house was not built out of spite to any one. The facts, I believe, are as follows:

When Lexington Avenue was laid out by the city there was left on the hands of Mr Richardson's wife a small strip of ground—say, 10 feet wide by 150 feet long. Mr Richardson was approached by one of his neighbors living on Eighty-second street to know what he was going to do with the ground thus left in his possession. He said he should build on it and live in the house himself. The party said he could not make any use of such a small piece of ground, and offered him \$1000 for it. He said no; it was worth \$5000 to him, and he commenced at once to excavate preparatory to building. The neighbor, seeing he actually meant to do as he said, then offered him the sum he had named. But Mr Richardson said he was too late, and he was a brick mason and understood putting up buildings, went forward and erected two houses between Eighty-second and Eighty-third Streets, covering the ground on his hands. The houses do no discredit to adjoining property, being four stories, with suitable facings, and Mr Richardson lived and died there. If the same was any discomfort to himself and wife this is no business of the public, and I can't see that any one has any right to take exceptions.

Mr Richardson was a self-made man, without a dollar in the world. At the age of 14 we find him acting as a tender to some boss mason, and one of the incidents of his first experience, he told the writer, was that one day the boss wanted some hair to mix with his mortar, and they caught young Richardson and cut off all his hair, (he had a heavy head of hair,) and used the same to finish their job. For years he worked as a journeyman at the wages of \$1.50 per day, and what he did he did well. He soon began to make contracts himself, and in later years he pointed with pride to numerous stores and office buildings he had built in the vicinity of Wall street. He also turned his attention to water works, and built among others the Bridgeport Water Works, at Bridgeport, Conn., and also the Houston Water Works, at Houston, Texas. He also turned his attention to railroad building, doing much to build the Union Pacific, and entirely the Utah Northern Road from Ogden to Boise City, in Idaho; for this latter road he furnished the whole capital, equipping the same with locomotives, cars, &c., and not issuing any bond or stocks; the whole was finished—several hundred miles in length. He afterward sold the same to Jay Gould and his associates.

He was a dear friend of Brigham Young of Utah, and was connected with him in numerous large enterprises in Salt Lake City, and later years with his son, John W. Young, much to his regret. Mr Richardson has been called by many a miserly person. This could only be said to be true as to himself, but he did not carry this out toward others. He was far from selfish, and he did much to encourage and help young men, as his estate shows large holdings of notes against a great many people which are not worth the paper they are written on. The writer could tell of many instances where his donations were large and only since his death have come to light. It was his wish that these benefactions should not be known while he was living. He gave largely to enterprises connected with the Episcopal church; also to other benevolent objects.

Mr Richardson was always a welcome friend and counselor in the office of the Vanderbilts and Goulds, and much of his success in middle life is largely traced to information gained by his frequent intercourses with them, and in later years with the sons of the elder Gould, Chauncey M. Depew, and others.

The newspapers, at the time of the death of Mr Richardson, greatly exaggerated the amount of property he left, some of them placing the amount at \$30,000,000. Now, the writer, who probably was as close a business acquaintance as Mr Richardson possessed, being with him for 30 years in the ownership of railroads, steamboats, water companies, &c., states that Mr Richardson, some 10 years ago, was worth from \$6,000,000 to \$8,000,000. This was during the life of Jay Gould, Sidney Dillon, and William H. Vanderbilt. At that time he placed the greater part of his wealth in the names of his son, daughter, and niece, leaving some two millions or thousands for speculative and invest-

ments purposes in his own name. The greater part of this money was lost by bad investments, depression of values, and stock speculations. In later years Mr Richardson, not having the advice of his old associates, lost money rapidly and his estate to-day will not clean up, after his loans are paid, \$750,000 of good money.

He was largely interested in Mexican investments and in Thirty-ninth Street Ferry property. The depreciation on these two properties alone was over a million. If the heirs under the last will should be successful, they will find much less than that amount to divide.

[Marcus C. Hawley, New York, January 6, 1898.]