

Charles Gerber

June 2, 1865 – March 1937

Death Claims Chas. Gerber, Prominent Monticello Citizen Had Been in Poor Health For Several Months; Conduct Rites

Striking with shocking and unexpected suddenness, death early Monday morning claimed the life of Charles Gerber, 71-year-old Spanish-American war veteran, highly respected Monticello citizen, and for approximately 23 years proprietor of the Gerber barber shop here.

Although he had been in relatively poor health for the past few months, Mr. Gerber's condition was not considered serious and his sudden demise consequently caused deep sorrow among his many friends and acquaintances. He had apparently arisen shortly before 6 a. m. to go to the bathroom where he was found dead about 7 o'clock by Mrs. Gerber, who became alarmed when he failed to answer her calls. Mr. Gerber's death occurred about 6 a. m., according to the attending physician, and it was caused by coronary thrombosis which is the technical medical term for a clot in the vessels of the heart.

Native of Switzerland

Charles Gerber, son of John and Elizabeth Buri Gerber, was a native of Heimiswil, Canton Bern, Switzerland, where he was born June 2, 1865. The family came to the United States when he was only five years of age, resided for a brief period in Tennessee, and then continued west as far as McConnell, Ill, where they homesteaded a farm. It was in this vicinity that Mr. Gerber grew to manhood, earning his livelihood by working on farms. Then he went to Monroe where he learned the barber trade under Oscar Dietz, who is well remembered by the older citizens of Monroe and other parts of the county. After becoming proficient in his chosen trade, which he mastered in a relatively short time, Mr. Gerber pursued this line of endeavor in different communities.

Spanish-American Veteran

On April 7, 1899, gripped by a spirit of adventure, Mr. Gerber enlisted in the United States army at Freeport, Ill. For a time he was stationed at Fort Sheridan, Ill., before going to Camp Meade, Pennsylvania, which was his last important training camp before departing for San Francisco where his regiment sailed for the Philippines to battle against Spain. During his service across the Pacific, Mr. Gerber participated in two major battles and several skirmishes, enduring many hardships climaxed when his company was trapped for three weeks in a dense swampland closely resembling a jungle with nothing for drinking water except the water from a pool where buffalo came to quench their thirst.

Mr. Gerber served as corporal and trumpeter of his outfit. Shortly before he was honorably discharged from the army May 3, 1902, he declined an offer to serve as trumpeter of an army unit on a world tour, the proposal coming in recognition of his outstanding ability on that instrument. Mr. Gerber's fondness for music clung to him through the years and he was an ardent admirer of Monticello's highly talented school band.

Opens Barber Shop

Following his discharge from the service at Camp Angel's Island, California, Mr. Gerber eventually returned to Monroe where he conducted his own barber shop. He was married there to Anna Boppart Sept. 25, 1906. On October 16, 1912, he opened a barber shop in Monticello, operating the business until the middle of September, 1935, when ill health forced his retirement. From Oct. 3rd until Dec. 1st of that year he was confined for treatment at the U. S. Veterans' hospital in Milwaukee, In the summer of 1931, Mr. Gerber had submitted to major surgery at the same institution.

Friend of Young and Old

"Charlie's" many friends and acquaintances are going to miss him very keenly, not only because of the impression left by his well known honesty, integrity, and other worthy traits, but also because his jolly disposition made him a particular favorite with old and young alike. Although he was past 70 years of age, he was not old in the usual meaning of the word because his sharp sense of humor staved off many of the senile effects which usually accompany advancing years. Mr. Gerber was a story teller par excellence, always dipping into an inexhaustible reservoir of thrilling army experiences or imaginary exploits with which he never failed to fasten the interest of his listeners. A great lover of the out-of-doors, he was an expert marksman, hunter, and fisherman, and his personal anecdotes concerning his experiences in these particular fields were almost endless.

Mr. Gerber was also a kind and considerate husband and father, and a willing and helpful neighbor.

Survivors are the widow and one daughter, Miss Elizabeth, employed in stenographic work in Milwaukee; four brothers, Fred and Frank Gerber, Monroe; Jacob, Freeport; and Albert, Wilmot, S. D.; and five sisters, Mrs. Elizabeth Shippy and Mrs. Lillian Solace, McConnell, Ill.; Miss Lena Gerber and Mrs. L. D. Van Meter, Orangeville, and Mrs. Rose Shippy, Dakota, Ill.

Funeral services for Mr. Gerber who was a member of the Spanish war veteran's organization and the Nineteenth Infantry association, were conducted at 2 p. m. Wednesday in the Gerber home. Rev. A. R. Felts, pastor of the Evangelical church, officiated. Military rites were held at the grave in Highland cemetery with a firing squad and taps part of the ceremony. Co. K of Monroe was represented by military escort with bugler, who played taps, while Rachel Judd, expert soloist of the local school, band, played the echo in the distance. C. M. Stauffer, chaplain of the Fred Amstutz post of the American Legion, conducted the military rites at the grave, assisted by Rev. Felts.

Pallbearers were R. W. Woelffer, M. E. Lynn, R. H. Schoonover, Wilbert J. Dick, Otto E. Bontly, and J. W. Barlow, all Legionnaires. W. E. Blum, American Legion, and L. W. Ogden, Spanish-American war veteran, were color bearers, while James Dooley and O. D. Curtis, Legion members, were color guards