

DR. IRWIN SHEPARD

1843 -1916



Born: July 5, 1843, Skaneatele,
Onondaga County, New York

Entered Service: 1861 from Washtenaw County, Michigan

Branch: Co. E, 17th Michigan Volunteer Infantry

Conflict: **Civil War**
On November 20, 1863, burned farm near
Ft. Sanders, Knoxville, Tennessee

Death: April 17, 1916, Winona, Minnesota

Submitted by
Marilyn Burbank
Rochester Chapter DAR

DR. IRWIN SHEPARD

EARLY YEARS

Irwin Shepard was born 5 July 1843 in Skaneateles, Onondaga County, New York, the son of Luman Shepard, a farmer, and his wife, Betsy L Pangburn. His descent on his father's side is English, and his mother's ancestors came from Holland. Irwin attended rural schools in New York until he was 13 years old when the family moved to Chelsea, Washtenaw County, Michigan. He attended the village school until 1859 when he entered the State Normal School at Ypsilanti, Michigan.

WAR YEARS:

When the Civil War began in 1861, Irwin and some college friends joined Company E, 17th Michigan Volunteer Infantry. Initially, he was a Private but was soon promoted to Corporal. He was awarded the Medal of Honor as a Corporal for action on 20 November 1863 near Fort Sanders, Knoxville, Tennessee, when he voluntarily joined in a mission to destroy and burn buildings on the Judge Reese farm. The farmhouse was being used by Confederate sharpshooters to harass Union lines. During that mission a sharpshooter was firing at the group from above. Irwin's group was ordered to retreat, but he stayed behind and continued in that mission to burn those buildings, thus insuring their total destruction. This was accomplished at imminent risk of his life. He was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor 34 years later.

Irwin was also engaged in the following battles: South Mountain, Antietam, Brandy Station, Fredericksburg, Virginia; Green River, Kentucky; Vicksburg and Jackson, Mississippi; Loudan, and The Wilderness. He was wounded at the Battle of the Wilderness.

POST WAR YEARS:

After his recovery Irwin resumed his college studies at Olivet College, Olivet, Michigan, receiving his degrees of A.B., A.M, and Ph. D. at that institution.

In 1871 he married Mary Bassett Elmer of Olivet, Michigan. Three children were born to them: a daughter who died in childhood, and two sons, Elmer I. Shepard and Ernest E. Shepard.

He began his professional career at Charles City, Iowa, where he became Superintendent of Schools for four years. In 1875 he came to Winona, Minnesota, as principal of Winona High School. Three years later he was made Superintendent of the Winona public school system, and in 1879 he was appointed President of Winona State Normal School. At the Normal School Dr. Shepard established the first kindergarten west of the Mississippi. He also started a training course for prospective kindergarten teachers. One of Dr. Shepard's most important

contributions to the Winona Normal School and the Normal School System in Minnesota was the establishment of a Normal School diploma as a certificate of qualification to teach.

In 1893 Dr. Shepard resigned his position at Winona Normal to become secretary of the National Educational Association, a position he held until he retired. He handled correspondence and convention planning from an office in his home.

Dr. Sheppard was a member of the John Ball Post No. 45, G.A.R., Department of Minnesota, and served as aide on the staff of the department commander.

Dr. Irwin Shepard died on April 17, 1916, in Winona, and was survived by his wife, Mary, who died in 1919. Other survivors included his two sons, Elmer who was an Assistant Professor of Mathematics at Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts, and Elmer, who was an assistant cashier at the Deposit Bank of Winona. He and his wife, are buried in Woodlawn Cemetery in Winona. Through the combined effort of the Winona County Veteran's Affairs office / a local Civil War reenactor and the Disabled American Veterans , an official bronze marker was placed on Shepard's grave in the summer of 2000.

Irwin Shepard



Woodlawn Cemetery

DOCUMENTATION

Obtained at Winona County Historical Society Archives
South Fourth Street
Winona, Minnesota

1. Personal account of Dr. Irwin Shepard's life, probably dictated by Dr. Shepard but finished by some else because he talks about his death in the first person.
2. The Winona Daily Republican, April 19, 1918, p. 12. "Noted Educator Pays High Tribute to Dr. Irwin Shepard."
3. The Winona Area Post, Vol. 7, No.9, February 29, 1984, "Irwin Shepard, educator"
4. History of Winona County (MN), Volume 2, pp. 681-2, published 1913
5. History & Heritage, Winona Daily News, July 22, 2001, "Medal of Honor marker 84 years late to Shepard"
6. The Daily Republican Herald, April 17, 1916, page 2, "Dr. Irwin Shepard, Prominent Educator Died in City Today"
7. "The Early Years", The Winona Daily News, (no date) p. 21, by Jerome Christenson, "11. Irwin Shepard: Medal of Honor Winner"
8. Winona Daily News, May 16, 2000, "Veteran's Grave to be Honored for Civil War Heroics"
9. Progressive Men of Minnesota, 1897, page 47
10. Winona State Normal School, p. 191, biographical sketch of President Shepard