

# **Portman, Reginald F.B. 1853 - 1932**

**PORTMAN, DARNELL, WARREN, DUNCAN, REUM, STEWART**

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For many years Reginald F. B. Portman has been importantly connected with the legal business of Winneshiek county and Decorah, but now lives retired from active practice, devoting his time largely to looking after his investments and other interests. Born in Staple, Fitzpaine, Taunton, England, February 20, 1853, he is a son of Rev. F. B. and Frances Ann (Darnell) Portman, both natives of the mother country. The Portman family is one of great distinction in England, Viscount Portman, of Bryanston, being a first cousin of our subject. The father was the youngest son in the family and, as is often the case, embraced a ministerial career. He became a rector of the Episcopal church and served as rural dean for Taunton for twenty-five or thirty years. He was also for some time canon of Wells cathedral in Somersetshire, England. He died in 1893, his wife having died some time previously.

Reginald F. B. Portman, of this review, early became connected with Her Majesty's navy, becoming a member of a training ship when twelve years of age. He became a midshipman but his career was cut short after four and a half years of service, when he was discharged on account of an injury on April 21, 1869. He crossed the Atlantic to the United States in 1872, locating in Decorah, where there was a large English settlement. He engaged in farming and in the machine shop business as a member of the firm of Horn, Portman & Clive Company until 1877, when he began to read law in the office of C. T. Brown, in Decorah, being admitted to practice in November, 1878. Mr. Portman then formed a partnership with Mr. Brown under the firm name of Brown & Portman, the relationship continuing for two years, since which time he practiced alone until his retirement. A man who exemplified in his conduct the lofty ideals of an ancient and honorable calling, he honored his profession by paying it honor, and by his adherence to the solid virtues and enlightened principles underlying the law. He soon secured a very extensive practice, success being the best evidence of his capability. Of keen perceptive power, he always applied the principles of the law accurately to the point in litigation. Since retiring from the profession he gives his time largely to his investments and is also prominent in Masonry, in which he holds high rank.

In 1878 Mr. Portman was married to Mrs. Caroline S. Warren, a daughter of John Stewart, for many years a resident of Decorah, now deceased. They had three children: Blanche E., the wife of James H. Duncan, of Decorah; Frances Catherine, who married Fred C. Reum, of that city; and John F. B., who died on April 15, 1912, at the age of twenty-six years, being at the time assistant cashier of the Citizens Savings Bank of Decorah. Both Mr. and Mrs. Portman are devout members of the Episcopal church of

Decorah, in the work of which they take a deep interest. Professionally he is a member of the Winneshiek County Bar Association. He has for thirty years served as a director of the Citizens Savings Bank and has done efficient work in that connection, holding from 1884 to 1904 the office of vice president. Among official honors which he has held is that of United States commissioner, in which office he served for several years; referee of bankruptcy; and justice of the peace, in which capacity he distributed justice fairly and impartially for two terms. For fourteen years he served as member of the Decorah school board, giving evidence of his interest in the cause of education. His active interest in the community is evident from the fact that he served as the first foreman of the Decorah hook and ladder company and as chief of the fire department from 1879 until 1882. His fraternal connections extend to the Masons, in which order he is a member of the blue lodge, chapter and commandery of Decorah and the Mystic Shrine of Cedar Rapids. He is past grand treasurer of the grand commandery of Iowa and also past grand treasurer of the grand chapter of this state, being widely and prominently known on account of these high positions.

Decorah has greatly profited by the activities of Mr. Portman, who is one of its most honored citizens, his life work having not only resulted in his own success, important as it is, but has been a serviceable factor in the growth and development of his community and Winneshiek county along moral, intellectual and material lines.