

GUSTAV BEHNCKE, PIONEER OSKOSH ARTIST, IS DEAD

JAN 31 - 1937
Veteran Painter and Last Survivor of Famous Gordon Stockade Party, Passes Away—Rites Sunday

Gustav Behncke, 84, veteran artist, last survivor of the group of men who went into the Black Hills in quest of gold in 1874, and one of the oldest Masons in Oshkosh, passed away this morning at 4 o'clock at his home, 123 Mt. Vernon street.

He died in his sleep. He had been in poor health for the last



Gustav Behncke

three or four years, but his condition had not been considered serious until last night. Death was attributed to general debility.

Mr. Behncke was born in Hamburg, Germany, Oct. 2, 1852, and he came to Oshkosh in the '70's.

He had inherited a love of the sea from Viking ancestors, and at an early age he ran away from home to become a sailor. He sailed the North sea and the Baltic sea.

He had traveled extensively in Europe and also in the western hemisphere. He journeyed across the great plains of the west, in the days when that section was closed to white men. He explored through the region in the company of Indians.

ART WAS LIFE WORK.

His life work was in the field of art. He inherited his talent from his father. Mr. Behncke was widely known for his work, and many pictures painted by him now hang in Oshkosh homes and public buildings.

Paintings by Mr. Behncke are to be found in the Masonic temple, American Legion clubhouse, Riverside chapel, and the Oshkosh State Teachers college.

He was one of the early church decorators in Wisconsin. Examples of his workmanship are to be found in 175 churches in various parts of the state.

He also did the interiors of many of the early mansions in Oshkosh, residences which housed such pioneer families as the Sawyers, Hays, Walls, Pratts, Waites, Ellsworths, Roes and others. It was the style, in those early days, to decorate walls and ceilings with flowers, birds, and scrolls. Most of the decoration was very heavy. No two decorations made by Mr. Behncke were alike. Some of his home decorating is still in evidence in some of the pioneer residences here.

STOCKADE PARTY MEMBER

Mr. Behncke was a member of the Gordon Stockade party, which went into the Black Hills in quest of gold in 1874. The party attempted to establish quarters in the Black Hills, but was removed by soldiers because the land belonged to the Indians, and no treaty had been made.

The party of which Mr. Behncke was a member included 30 men of various types and trades from throughout the United States. In the group were farmers, merchants, brewers and others, all of whom were seeking gold. The expedition left Sioux City, Ia., in the spring of 1873. The Black Hills territory was settled by the Sioux Indians and after being taken out of there by a Lieutenant Sippley, the group of 30 men were sent to Fort Laramie in Wyoming.

During their stay at Fort Laramie the men met with many and varied experiences. There were Indian raids and at night one could watch the Indian fire signals from hilltop to hilltop as the redmen watched the fort. From that place the little band of gold seekers followed the old Mormon trail that led into Utah.

WAS ARDENT FISHERMAN

Mr. Behncke was an ardent fisherman, and he loved to sail. His sailboat, in former years, was to be seen out on Lake Winnebago in almost any kind of weather. He fished in all parts of Lake Winnebago, and in the adjacent rivers. All of the choice fishing spots were known to him, and he rarely failed to catch his share of fish.

He was a charter member of the old national guard unit, Company F, and a member of Oshkosh lodge, No. 27, Masons.

Mr. Behncke was married in 1879 to Miss Ida Heiss of Nekimi. Their golden wedding anniversary was celebrated June 16, 1929.

In addition to the widow, other survivors are three children, Mrs. Charles E. Roeder, Miss Mable Behncke and Nile J. Behncke; two grandchildren, Charles B. Roeder of Milwaukee and Nile Roeder; and one great grandchild.

Funeral services will be held Sunday. There will be services at 2:30 o'clock at the Masonic temple. The Rev. J. N. Barnett will speak at the chapel at Riverside cemetery.

Friends may view the remains Saturday and Saturday evening at the Fiss & Bills funeral home and Sunday to the hour of the services at the temple.

MASONIC RITES FOR BEHNCKE

Oshkosh Artist and Pioneer Had Picturesque Life.

By Our Own Correspondent.

OSHKOSH, Jan. 21 — Gustav Behncke, 84, widely known Oshkosh artist, died at his home here today. Mr. Behncke was the last survivor of a group of 30 pioneers, the Gordon stockade party, that prospected the Black hills for gold in 1874. The party was ordered out by soldiers as the country had been reserved for the Sioux Indians.

Mr. Behncke was a sailor on the North and Baltic seas when a boy, but took up art as a life work. Many of his pictures now adorn public buildings and homes here. He was a church decorator and examples of his work are in nearly 200 churches in the state. He also did murals in homes of many pioneer Oshkosh residents.

Mr. Behncke was one of the oldest Oshkosh Masons and was a charter member of the original national guard unit here. He traveled in Europe and through this hemisphere, exploring the western plains in the company of Indians when that section was closed to white men.

Survivors are his widow; three children, Nile J. Oshkosh artist and curator at the Oshkosh Public museum; Mrs. Charles E. Roeder and Miss Mable, Oshkosh; two grandchildren, Nile and Charles Roeder, Milwaukee; and one great-grandchild.

Masonic services will be held at the Masonic temple here Sunday with burial in Riverside cemetery.