

John Milton Earle (1794-1874)

A Quaker originally from Leicester, Earle was editor and publisher of the *Spy*, 1823-1857, an early activist in the anti-slavery movement, and a Free-soiler in 1848. There is only a brief mention and no biography of him in Nutt's history, and no mention of his death could be found in the *Spy*. The print quality of this notice in the *Gazette* is unfortunate but could not be helped.

EVENING GAZETTE.

WORCESTER, MASS.

MONDAY EVENING, FEB. 9, 1874.

The death of Hon. John Milton Earle, which took place at his residence in this city, yesterday afternoon, removes another of the old citizens of Worcester who have witnessed, and taken part in its development from a quiet rural village to a large and bustling city. His reputation was not confined to Worcester, but his name was familiar, for the greater portion of his life, in every part of the county, and very generally throughout the Commonwealth. As editor and conductor of the *Spy* some thirty-five years, he was brought in contact with the leading men of his time, and his labors tended to develop and to keep alive a healthy sentiment in the county, which has always maintained the front rank in its moral and political character. He always commanded the respect and enjoyed the confidence of his fellow-citizens, and was made their representative in various public trusts. He had been a member of both branches of the Legislature, an alderman of the city, was one of the original incorporators of the Worcester County Institution for Savings, where he held a vice presidency to the last, and had been a director of the State Mutual Life Insurance Company from its inception. He was an ardent, practical horticulturist. His teachings and example in this field have been of great value to the community, and the Worcester County Horticultural Society owes much of its success to him.

Mr. Earle was a consistent member of the society of Friends. He was born at Mulberry Grove in the north part of Leicester in April, 1794, and had therefore nearly attained his 80th birthday. His father, Pliny Earle, was one of the earliest manufacturers of card-clothing, which is still the occupation of another branch of the Earle family. He was the eldest of eight children, of whom three survive. He married Sarah Hussey of Nantucket, who afterwards became widely known for her labors in the cause of anti-slavery, and who has been for several years deceased. Six children out of eight live to lament their loss.

John Milton Earle

Evening Gazette

Feb-09-1874

Mr. Earle came to Worcester more than fifty years ago, and, with his brother-in-law, Anthony Chase, Esq., opened a store for the sale of every variety of goods called for by the farmers and others of that day. The firm of Earle & Chase was for some years conspicuous in the county, and is remembered by not a few to the present day. It was not many years, however, before he abandoned trade, and assumed the occupation which, above all others, seemed most suited to his temperament and character, the profession of journalism. On all the great political and politico-economic questions of his time, he was a Whig of the school of Henry Clay and Daniel Webster. The curse of slavery, however, he felt very deeply, and was in full sympathy with all just efforts for its abolition. When, therefore, the late Hon. Charles Allen returned, a "bolter," from the convention which had nominated Zachary Taylor for the presidency, Mr. Earle, though reluctant to leave an organization which he had so much loved, hesitated only a moment before throwing his influence on the side of the new movement, whose development and complete success it was his good fortune to live to witness.

In 1858 Mr. Earle retired from the newspaper field. He was appointed postmaster under Abraham Lincoln, and might have retained the position under Andrew Johnson if he had accepted the overtures which were made him to adopt the latter's "policy." But he was no apostate. He spurned the tempting bribe, preferring a clear conscience and an honorable record to a competency obtained only by a sacrifice of moral principle.

His last days were spent in the quiet of his own household, and in the society of old friends, who found pleasure and profit in his rich conversational powers and in his store of information and sound sense.

