

## Lieut. Col. Thomas Antisell (1817 - 14 Jun 1893)

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*The Evening Star, July 3, 1878*

### **Dr. Antisell for Health Officer**

A delegation of physicians consisting of Drs. Toner, J.C. Riley, Lovejoy, Ashford, W.W. Johnston and Ross, called this morning upon the Commissioners and urged the appointment of Dr. Antisell as the most suitable person to health officer, in consideration of his experience, executive abilities and hygienic knowledge, and an analytical chemist and microscopist, and as a person who enjoys the confidence of the medical profession of the District. While urging his appointment as the one which they considered the best for the interests of the District, nothing derogatory to any other candidate as far as personal character is concerned.

*The Evening Star, October 6, 1879*

Dr. Thomas Antisell has accepted the Professorship of Chemistry and Toxicology in the medical department of the University of Georgetown a position which he filled for many years with great credit prior to his mission to Japan.

**Antisell.** At his residence, 1311 Q street northwest on Wednesday, June 14, 1893 at 6:15 a.m., Thomas Antisell, MD, formerly of Dublin Ireland in the 76th year of his age. Funeral at 3 o'clock p.m., Friday, June 16. Interment Congressional Cemetery. Friends respectfully invited. (New York, Detroit, Philadelphia, Japan, Dublin, papers please copy).

*The Evening Star, June 15, 1893*

### **Death of Dr. Antisell**

#### **The Close of a Career That Was Full of Activity and Useful Work**

One of the well-known men of the city passed away yesterday when Dr. Thomas Antisell breathed his last. The news of his death, as announced in yesterday's Star, came to his numerous friends with none of the suddenness of an unexpected shock. For some time past his condition has been such that his death might have occurred at any time. Three years ago he had a stroke of paralysis and the disease has been progressive ever since. At the time of his death, which occurred at his home, 1311 Q street, his daughters, Miss Antisell and Mrs. Cruikshank, were with him. Dr. Antisell leaves a family of two sons and six daughters, William Mackey Cruikshank, one of five grandchildren, graduated with honors from West Point only a few days ago.

The funeral services will be held tomorrow afternoon at 3 o'clock from the late residence. The interment will be made at the Congressional cemetery. The honorary pallbearers will be Dr. Lovejoy, Dr. J.M. Toner, Dr. Louis Mackall and Mr. Richard Oulahan, with four members of the District Medical Association. The active pallbearers will be Major William Plunkett, Benjamin Butterworth, James L. Norris, W.H. Baldwin, Edward Farquhar, Assistant Surgeon General Greenleaf, Dr. A.A. Snyder and Charles Lieberman.

#### *A Busy, Honorable Career*

Dr. Antisell had a distinguished career. He was born in Ireland in the year 1817, and belonged to a well-known family. From his early student years, which were spent in the best schools of Ireland,

England and Germany, his special study was chemistry. He, however, secured a thorough medical education and entered upon the practice of his profession in Dublin, where he also held the position of lecturer of chemistry in the Dublin School of Medicine. Owing to his connection with the young Ireland party he was obliged to leave his native country in 1848. He came to this country and practiced his profession in New York and also lectured on chemistry in various colleges. Several years before the breaking out of the war he was appointed to the position of principal examiner in the patent office in charge of the chemical division. He entered the volunteer service of the Union army as a brigade surgeon. He was afterward medical director of the twelfth army corps, finally receiving the rank of brevet lieutenant colonel for faithful and efficient service.

In 1871 he went to Japan as technologist in the government commission appointed to develop the resources of the northern islands of that empire. He served there six years. He was a member of a number of scientific societies and was at all times in request as a lecturer before scientific institutions. He had been a contributor to scientific literature since his student days, and his works cover a wide range of technical subjects, one of the best known being his "Home Encyclopedia of Arts and Manufacture." His works are regarded as standard. He had been connected with the Georgetown University for thirty years and received from that institution the degree of doctor of philosophy. He resumed his connection with the patent office, which continued until disease rendered him incapable of much active work.

*The Evening Star, February 2, 1919*

#### **The Rambler's Reveries Along Persimmon Lane**

... The Rambler's memory was false on one point. Dr. Antisell came to Washington before the civil war. In the Library of Congress are a number of books and addresses by Dr Thomas Antisell, who was born in 1817 and died in 1893. One of these works is a "Handbook of the Useful Arts," Including Agriculture, Architecture, Domestic Economy, Engineering, Machinery, Manufacture, Mining and Photogenic and Telegraphic Art. Being an Exposition of Their Principles and Practice and a Compend of American and European Invention." It was published in 1852. Another musty old book contained an "Introductory Address Delivered Before the Medical Department of Georgetown College, Session of 1865-1866." It was printed by McGill & Witherow of Washington in 1865. Another book is "The Manufacture of Photogenic and Hydro-Carbon Oils from Coal and Other Bituminous Substances Capable of Supplying Burning Fluids, by Dr. Thomas Antisell." Still another book is a "Biographical Sketch of Dr. Joseph M. Toner -- 1878 -- being a reprint from a memorial volume of the Rocky Mountain Medical Association, printed at Lancaster, Penn. in 1878."

The Rambler searched such records of the Medical Society of the District of Columbia as he could get at for facts about Dr. Antisell. He came upon the matter he was in search of in Dr. Samuel C. Busey's book, "Personal Reminiscences and Recollections of Forty-six Years' Membership in the Medical Society of the District of Columbia and Residence in This City." In that book was the following sketch of Dr. Antisell:

Thomas Antisell was lineally descended from Sir Bertine Entwysel, "who accompanied Henry II to Ireland." He was graduated in medicine from the Royal College of Surgeons, London, and subsequently studied chemistry in Paris and Berlin. He practiced medicine in Dublin until 1848, when he became a political exile on account of his connection with the young Ireland party. He then came to this country and settled in the city of New York, where he pursued his profession until 1854, when he accepted the position of geologist to the Park expedition in the railroad survey of southern California and Arizona. In 1856 he returned from the expedition and accepted the position of chief examiner in the chemical department of the patent office. At the breaking out of the war he entered the volunteer service as brigade surgeon, and at its close was mustered out with the rank of brevet lieutenant colonel.

In 1871 he went to Japan as technologist of the government commission to develop the resources of the northern islands of that empire. In recognition of his ability and as a testimonial of his personal regard for Dr. Antisell the Emperor of Japan decorated him with the order of the Rising Sun of Merjil, making him a nobleman of the empire with the right to carry two swords. After his return from Japan in 1877 he resumed his pursuit of chemistry, occupying during the subsequent years of his life various positions of distinction in the line of his special branch of science.

Dr. Antisell was a popular teacher. He began as a lecturer in Dublin and after coming to this country occupied the professorship of chemistry in the colleges at Woodstock, Vt., Hatsfield and Berkshire, Mass., and afterward in the medical departments of the Columbian and Georgetown Universities. He was for a period chemist of the Agricultural Department and finally resumed his duties as examiner in the patent office.

He led a very unobtrusive home life, rarely appearing in public except where his duty called him. He was faithful to duty and conscientious in its performance, unostentatious in manner and cordial in friendship."

In the "History of the Medical Society of the District of Columbia, 1817-1909," published by the society, the Rambler found additional facts relating to Dr. Antisell. He was the son of Christopher Antisell of King's county, Ireland, a distinguished barrister, and Margaret Daly, daughter of Surgeon Daly of Dublin. He married twice. Dr. Antisell's first wife was Eliza Anne Nowlan of Dublin. The marriage was solemnized in 1841. In 1854 Dr. Antisell married Marion Stuart Forsyth of Detroit, daughter of Paymaster Forsyth, U.S.A. From 1861 to 1865 he was medical director of the 12th Army Corps, surgeon in charge of Harewood Hospital, surgeon in charge of sick and wounded officers in Washington and president of the board of examiners for surgeons and assistant surgeons of volunteers. The "History of the Medical Society" contains this: "From 1855 to 1893, excepting the interval of Army service and while in Japan, he lived in Washington. On May 10, 1877, he was again appointed examiner in the patent office and held the position until July, 1890, when, his health failing, he was reduced to a first-class clerkship and finally removed September 20, 1891"

There is a portrait of Dr. Antisell which shows him to be a studious, well nourished, good-looking professional man with side whiskers, pointed beard and mustache. He has a broad, smooth forehead, eyes of normal size, with a marked fullness of the lids and a symmetrical face.

In February 1864, in view of the prevalence of smallpox in Washington, the Medical Society appointed a committee of one member from each ward of Washington and two from Georgetown to consider and report upon the sanitary conditions of the District. Dr. Antisell was made chairman of that committee and the other members were Drs. W.G.H. Newman, F. Howard, William Marbury, J. Eliot, G.W. McCoy, J.M. Roberts and J.E. Morgan. The annual address of the Medical Society, September 26, 1876, was delivered by Dr. Antisell at Marini's Hall. The annual address in 1877 was delivered at the same place by Dr. A.Y.P. Garnett. In 1870 the Medical Society appointed a committee called "the committee on the medical constitution of the District of Columbia." The members of that committee were Drs. Antisell, Drinkard