



to administer the rites usually observed at the near approach of death. Death came to the sufferer at 2:20 yesterday morning. He died surrounded by his family and spiritual ministers, peacefully and without pain.

He was conscious of what was going on around him up to about an hour before his death and sought to console the loved ones who were about him. The scene at the bedside is said to have been a most effective one. The devoted wife, worn out with her tireless attentions during the long illness, seemed to be the especial object of the thoughts of the dying man, and he endeavored in every way possible to reassure and comfort her. He had called his family about his bed on Saturday and rendered to each the parting admonition.

Mr. Fitzgerald's illness began three years ago with a stroke of paralysis and he lay for many weeks at that time at death's door, but finally rallied and in time became able to get around town again and devote some attention to affairs of business. His ailment at that time seems to have manifested itself chiefly in the brain and it was predicted tht he would never regain his mental vigor. When he again began to look after his business affairs it does not appear that he was much the worse mentally, but it was apparent that his physical vigor was gone. One morning last summer he took a trip to his farm near Greenwood, and upon his return was again taken ill. Since that time his strength has steadily failed. His death is ascribed to general sclerosis of the arterial system, a general breaking down. It was not due to any technical disease.

Deceased was a native of Limerick county, Ireland. He was born April 29, 1829. He came to America at the age of 15 years with the family of his father, the latter having been evicted from his farm in Ireland. They settled in New York, where the father soon afterward died. He began life as a laborer on the Erie Canal, but in company with his brother, Edward, soon branched out into business as a railroad contractor, a business which he pursued during the balance of his days, and in which he was signally successful. He built railroads in New England during the war and later came west and pursued the same business in Wisconsin and Iowa. In 1868, associated with R. C. Cushing, now of Omaha, Stephen Mallory and others as well known, he took a contract for the extension of the Burlington road through Iowa to Plattsmouth. They completed the work in 1869 and Mr. Fitzgerald at once took up his abode in Plattsmouth.

He immediately commenced the construction of the B & M and completed it to Lincoln in July of the following year. After the B & M had been completed to Kearney to a junction with the Union Pacific, Mr. Fitzgerald built the Atchison of Nebraska, from Atchison, Kas. to Lincoln, besides several other branch lines. In 1875 he commenced the long line of the B & M from Hastings to Denver, via Red Cloud, finishing the road to the latter point in November of that year. The work of constructing the line to Denver continued at intervals until 1882, when it was finally completed.

There are many other roads in the United States in the building of which the deceased and his associates were actively interested, among which are the Denver, Memphis and Atlantic, out of which grew the great lawsuit between deceased and a number of eastern money kings, including Jay Gould, Russel Sage and their clique, involving over a million, in which case deceased recently secured judgment in supreme court for \$860,000.

The St. Louis & Canada road through Indiana and the Cincinnati Southern road through Tennessee were also built by him and his business associates.



Mount Emerald  
The Fitzgerald home in Lincoln, Nebraska

In addition to his work in that line deceased was active in other lines of business. Especially was he a factor in banking and real estate transactions. He has dealt in real estate in many of the leading cities in the United States, and owned a large quantity of valuable real property at the time of his death. His possessions comprise a farm of about 4,000 acres near Greenwood in Cass county, large tracts in Gage and Jefferson counties and a large amount of city property in Plattsmouth and Lincoln. In the latter are notably his fine residence property comprising four blocks in the southeast part of the city, the large five-story building occupied by Plummer, Perry & Co's wholesale grocery house, of which firm he was a member, the building occupied by Mayer Bros., the building where his offices are located on the west side of government square, the vacant quarter block at Ninth and N streets and other properties almost as valuable. He was for years president of the First National Bank of this city and the First National bank of Plattsmouth. He recently disposed of his interests in the latter institution but he is still interested in the First National of this city. He has also been connected with the banking interests of other western cities.



Prominent as he was in the business and financial world, it was as an Irish-American patriot that the deceased achieved his chief celebrity. He was always ready to give and to do anything that was required to advance the interests of his native country. His sympathies for the oppressed of his native land was manifested on every possible occasion, and not only commanded his large means, but his time and energy as well. It is said that this active sympathy was first manifest at the time of the ill-fated Fenian invasion of Canada, when the deceased incurred a considerable outlay in the purchase of a large quantity of arms for use in that demonstration, which, however, were never used, but lay for years stored in boxes in the basement of his large building at Plattsmouth.

In 1889, he was selected President of the Irish national league and devoted a great deal of his time to the work of that organization for several years. It was during his presidency that the organization did its most active and effective work, and even after he had been succeeded by M. V. Gannon, then located at Omaha, but no in Chicago, he accompanied a delegation of prominent Irish-Americans to Ireland to endeavor to reconcile the factions that threatened the life of the league. His name was hallowed by every Irish patriot in this and the old world and is revered in the land of his nativity.

Deceased was a devout Catholic, and his generosity in the character of a religious benefactor is manifest in many institutions that owe their establishment chiefly to his liberality. The convent of the Holy Child Jesus, formerly the state university dormitory, was purchased outright by him and given for the work to which it is now devoted. He gave largely of his ample means to the church in whose teachings he had been reared, and his voice in the administration of its affairs was a powerful one.

Deceased leaves an estate that is estimated to be worth from \$1,000,000 to \$1,500,000, but it is difficult to place anything like an accurate valuation upon it. He leaves a family comprising his widow and four children. The latter are Ed. J., who is grown to manhood; John, aged about 18; Paul aged 12, and Lillian a girl of nine years. The former was not at home when his father died. He left home about a year ago, since which time his whereabouts have been unknown to his parents. When last heard from he was in Texas.

Three sisters and one brother also survive. They are Mrs. Charles McEntee of Plattsmouth, Mrs. John Blake and Mrs. John Toomey, both of Lyndon, Wisconsin, and David Fitzgerald of this city, who has been associated with the deceased in railroad building for several years and conducted the building of the recent extension of the Burlington to Billings.

The funeral will occur Wednesday morning at 10 o'clock in St. Theresa's pro-cathedral and the services will probably be conducted by Father O'Reilly of Detroit, who was prominently associated with deceased in his work as president of the Irish national league. If he is unable to come Father McGevney of Denver will probably officiate.

Few unlettered men reach the prominence that was attained by John Fitzgerald in national affairs, and many anecdotes relating to his life will long be recited by his friends. He was generous beyond the wont of men and wealth, charitable, public spirited, enterprising, a kind father and husband, a good citizen, thoroughly honest and a tireless laborer in any field of usefulness in which he was found.

Source: *Lincoln Evening News*, December 31, 1894, Pg. 1, Cols 1-2

Posted by [Susan Petersen](#) at 6:52AM 

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