

## DEATH OF DR. J. B. MARCHISI

Utica's Oldest Resident Expires

### *The End of a Remarkable Career Lasting-Over 95 years - Cresting the Alps with Napoleon - The Proprietor of Several Well-Known Medicines.*

The names of few Uticans are better or more widely known than that of Dr. John B. Marchisi, whose residence in this city date back over a period of time within the memory of few people now living. He was a very old gentleman, being over 90, but for all that his many friends expected that he would round out a full century. Therefore the announcement of his death which occurred at the residence of his son H. N. Marchisi, on Devereux Street, yesterday afternoon, will be a great surprise to them. Dr. Marchisi celebrated his 95th birthday on the 6th of August last, and up to and even after that enjoyed remarkable health for one of his years. He was able to go back and forth to his pharmacy on Blandina Street, and look after business to some extent, though the weight of his cares was borne by his son, who looked after all the details and the general management and to whose tender care his great longevity was largely due. Dr. Marchisi's life has been a most remarkable one, and the columns of a newspaper can hardly do it justice.

John B. Marchisi was born in Carmagcola, Piedmont, Italy, in the year 1789, and was one of a family of ten children, whose father was a music teacher. He early manifested a natural taste for chemistry, and started out to be a physician. He studied for seven years in a doctor's office and five years in a pharmacy, by which time he was thoroughly acquainted with all the departments of that profession. About that time Napoleon the Great made his March into Italy, and when he went back young Marchisi was among the conscripts who were forced to follow. He did not bear arms, for as he was an expert penman his services were required in the adjutant and quartermaster's offices. His reminiscences of the incidents of those stirring times were wonderful, and he loved to relate them to his friends, who would sit for hours at a time listening to stories about Napoleon, for whom young Marchisi had formed an attachment which amounted almost to devotion. Nothing could be said against the great General in his presence. He was with the French army in many historic places, among them being the crossing of the famous St. Bernard pass, in which so many thousands perished. There are probably very few who were in that terrible march that now live to tell about it. The old gentleman had quite a number of relics of his stay in the French army, which he prized highly. When he had been in the service some little time he and a party of others fell into the hands of the British when they were near Gibraltar. They were carried as prisoners of war to Canada, where they were put in prison. Hearing of Marchisi's position in the French army the British commanders offered to release him if he would agree to enter upon the same service in their army. He was finally persuaded to do this. He was made clerk in the adjutant's office in Kingston, and afterwards became paymaster. But he was all the time under a kind of surveillance and made up his mind to escape to America and then back to Italy. But during his stay in Kingston he had wooed and won a young lady of German parentage, who for over sixty years was to be his companion in life. How to escape and take her along with him was a difficult thing to see. But by a clever scheme both managed to reach Cape Vincent on the American side, and came on by stage to Utica. Mrs. Marchisi had relatives named Forbes living near here, and the Doctor was thus induced to postpone his intended departure for his native land several days. During that time he made the acquaintance of Dr. Hull, the primitive apothecary, who prevailed on him to go into business with him. And thus his long residence here was commenced.

That was the year 1815, and Utica with her now 40,000 inhabitants then boasted only seven modern homes. Genesee Street was a corduroy road, and the land now occupied by elegant residences on the hill was once offered Dr. Marchisi for \$200. Reminiscences of the early history of the place were

recalled to his remarkable memory by a single word, and what he could tell about things connected with it would fill a volume. For many years the venerable James C. DeLong, Deacon Bailey, Theodore S. Faxton, Michael McQuade and other aged Uticans, long since laid at rest, were in this habit of having birthday reunions at which old times were revived and lived over again. Now the Doctor has gone, and none of that coterie of veteran citizens are left.

He practiced as a physician with Dr. Hull for some time, and afterwards with Dr. Hitchcock. He was also connected with Warner in the drug store business at the corner of Main Street and Bagg's Square. After that he conducted what was known as the "Drug Exchange," in the old Devereux block. From there he removed his by that time, extensive business to the site now occupied by Roberts & Hoag's dry goods store. By this time Dr. Marchisi had become the proprietor of so many medicines and appliances that he soon found it necessary to confine his attention solely to their manufacture. He, therefore, established his present pharmacy on Blandina street, and has occupied it as a business place ever since. "Marchisi's Catholicon," of which he made the first preparation in 1850, has given his name a widespread reputation. It is a valuable medicine and at one time he was offered \$40,000 for the receipt. He manufactured great quantities of this, and realized considerable from its sale. At the fair, under the auspices of the Utica Mechanics' Association in 1848, when S.N. Oley was President, he exhibited one of his trusses and was awarded the premium. Since then he has so improved his appliances that they are for sale nearly everywhere. He was the owner of many valuable recipes and manufactured several small articles which were quite extensively sold. In fact there are few households in which his many medicines have not at one time or another been used. He was a thorough chemist, and being of an inventive mind was ever busy in making some new and useful preparation.

He was a studious man, and being a master of seven different languages was able to converse with anyone, and upon almost every subject. This made him many warm friends among people of all classes and nationalities. He was of such a genial and pleasant disposition that he was sure to be liked wherever he was known. He was scrupulously neat and accurate in everything, seldom making a mistake. His books are models in this respect and his recipes and formulas, written a half century ago, are today as clear and distinct as print. He kept all the old papers, bills, etc., and among them are some most curious specimens of the manner to which business was conducted in early days. He had letters dated as long ago as 1824, and later. It is only within a few years that the Doctor has known the exact date of his birth, but learning the address of a son of his old teacher in Italy the Clerk of Piedmont sent him a complete record of his birth, and also that of his father, mother, sisters and brothers, and also the date of their decease. The document is in the Italian language and has the seal of his native town attached. Many interesting things about which much could be said are to be found in his office.

Dr. Marchisi was always a Republican though he, like his son, cast his vote for Grover Cleveland. The old gentleman had to be restrained from giving his vote for Roscoe Conkling. He was a man who never sought publicity and never belonged to many organizations. But when any one came to him he would always help them along. He was a life member of the Utica Mechanics Association and was one of the stockholders in the old Female Academy.

He was the father of twelve children, of whom only three survive- Mrs. P.G. Tanner, of Cooperstown; F.W. Marchisi of Chicago, Ill., and H.N. Marchisi, of Utica. Mrs. Marchisi who for so long had been the partner of his joys and sorrows, went to her last rest about six years since. Their married life had been one of great happiness, and their home as pleasant as love could make it. Since his wife's death the doctor has made his home with his son Henry, who has spent the most of his life the companion of his father. He and his wife did all that tender and loving hands could do to make the old gentleman comfortable. Their watchful and affectionate care no doubt added many years to his long and useful life.

But it was chiefly due to the regularity of his habits of life that at his death he was the oldest resident of Utica. He was always a hearty eater, but ate only just certain things at certain times, and never anything else.

As a result he never knew, all through his life, what it was to be in pain. His constitution retained the strength to a remarkable degree, and only as long ago as New Year's he was writing on some cards. The letters are formed with a uniformity that is surprising, not betraying the latest unsteadiness of hand. Many a younger man would pride himself if he could sign his signature as well. The doctor had not been at his office a great deal since cold weather, but still had been able to be about the house. It was only three days ago that he said he would rather remain in his room. He complained of no pain or illness, he was simply tired. Yesterday afternoon his family noticed that he had changed. They remained in the room with him and his condition was of a person slumbering lightly. He was like this till about 4 o'clock, when he gave a little gasp and his spirit departed from the frame which had been its home for so many years. There was no struggle, and death came as a gentle sleep.

John B. Marchisi lives no more. But his life was one which furnishes an example from which all may profit. His career was long and useful, and among all the men with whom he did business or had sought to do, not one of them can be called his enemy. He was respected and honored by all and his death will be painful news to many. He was a member of Grace Church, lived happy and died happy. It seldom fails to the lot of any one man to go through such an eventful career as his. A history of his life would make an interesting volume. General McQuade has for some time been talking of undertaking such a task, and if he, or anyone else equally competent does, it will surely repay them for their pains.



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**Researched by Howard Dean***



**Dr. J. B. Marchisi at age 95 - Utica, New York**

