

A biography of author, explorer George Kennan 1845-1923

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The following biographical sketch was compiled by the late Eleanor Wilder for a local history file at Swan Library.

Medina claims George Kennan, explorer in Czarist Siberia and author of several books on the Siberian penal system, for although he was born in Norwalk, Ohio, he married Emeline Weld of Medina and always considered it his home.

When he died there in retirement in 1923 at the age of 78 he was enjoying a renewal of old friendships

and even the hazards of a small town society in which he loomed as a very bold literary lion. For the temptation to make the most of Kennan's residence was always a temptation. We can only assume that the hardness which sustained Mr. Kennan in his trips through bleak Siberia came to his aid when there occasions became trying.

For a great man he was one of America's first and finest correspondents, gifted with a journalistic flair for news and the writing of it. At the time, his books on Siberia, "Tent Life In Siberia," was published it



Siberia as a telegraph engineer and assisted in the construction of the middle division of the Russo-American telegraph line.

After a period with The Associated Press, he returned to investigate the exile system in 1886 "Siberia and The Exile System" was published in 1891. The book brought him renown both in the United States and England and led to many lecture tours.

"Tent Life In Siberia" was published in 1910. His reputation for foreign reporting was enhanced by representing "Outlook" magazine during the

was the only source on the Siberian exile system under the Czars and enlightenment on the beginnings on the colonization by such a grim method. No special training prepared George Kennan for his success. He was a high school graduate only and a telegrapher by profession. When only 20, he went to

Spanish-American and Russo-Japanese wars.

In 1907 he joined the staff of McClures, a periodical then in its heyday and known for attracting top flight writers.

In 1902, he went to Martinique for the "Outlook" to study Mt. Pelee.

Following the Russo-Japanese War he was awarded the Gold War medal of Japan in 1906 and two years later the Order of the Sacred Treasure.

He came back to Medina to run the Medina Tribune corporation in the early 1920s.

He returned to the spotlight again when he wrote "Misrepresentation In Railroad Affairs" in 1916 and "E.H. Harriman for Eastern Plans," 1917 and a two-volume biography on E.H. Harriman in 1922.

He died May 10, 1923, at his home in Medina.