

STARRETT, JOHN MILTON
1872-August 1, 1917

FARMER LOST LIFE IN EFFORT TO SAVE FRIEND

That the heroes of peace are as notable as the heroes of the battle field, and that self-sacrificing courage is not wholly confined to the realms of literature was demonstrated on Wednesday last, when John Starrett gave his life in a futile effort to save his friend, John Swartz.

The two men were digging a well on the farm of Mr. Starrett's father, T.G. Starrett, eleven miles northwest of Dwyer. A blast of powder had been fired and after waiting a few minutes for the gas to escape, Swartz went down in the well with his foot in a loop in the rope on the windless. He had hardly reached the bottom when he had called to be drawn up. When about half way to the top, he was overcome and fell back down in the well.

Fully realizing the danger, without a moment's hesitation, Starrett grabbed the rope and slid into the well to rescue his friend. A moment later, he called to his father to draw him up. The father began turning the windless, but directly the load was gone and he realized his son had also been overcome by the powder gas. He then took the team and hurried to M.F. Coleman's for help. Several men, including Dr. Hanna, were soon at the scene of the accident and the men were taken from the well. Starrett was still alive, but life had left Swartz, his neck having been broken when he fell from the rope. A few hours later, Dr. Phifer was summoned from Wheatland, but he arrived there was but little sign of life in Starrett, and he died a little later in the evening.

Both of the men were in the prime of life, about 45 years of age, and were highly respected citizens. Both had lived on homesteads a little over a year. Mr. Swartz leaves a wife and two small children while Mr. Starrett left a wife and five children, the oldest being 16 years of age.

Mr. Starrett's effort to save his friend was characteristic of the man. It had been his habit, all his life, to be helpful to the other fellow, often sacrificing his own comfort and welfare to do so, yet never failing to respond to the call for help, and it was with the lifelong habit of self sacrificing generosity that he finally "laid down his life for his friend".

The body of Mr. Swartz was sent to his old home in Nebraska for interment. Mr. Starrett was buried in the Wheatland cemetery.