

perience to the affairs of the firm he was able to pay creditors a considerable percentage of their claims. His plans were interrupted however by a fire in the plant which caused a heavy loss.

Later he organized a stock company, purchased the old business of Atkins & Soule, and, calling it the Phoenix Manufacturing Company, was made president of the corporation.

January 1st, 1873, he retired from the Berkey Bros. & Gay Company, selling his interest to his former partners. He then called to his aid a number of men prominent in the business affairs of the city, and, with additional capital, reorganized the Phoenix Manufacturing Company, changing its name to the Phoenix Furniture Company. The company erected a large factory and saw mill on W. Fulton and Summer streets, and he was its president until 1879 when he sold his interest and retired from active business. At the expiration of three years, when he arrived at the age of sixty, he again in 1882 opened a factory on Louis street, and success almost instantly rewarded his efforts.

The line of tables he brought out was a little better in every way, than anything of the kind then on the market. In 1885 he organized a stock company, calling it the Wm. A. Berkey Furniture Company, which had a factory on Waterloo street. He held the office of president of the company until his death in 1902, having retired from active service however some years previous on account of ill health.

He considered it the duty of every man to exercise his prerogative in conventions and at the ballot box. His convictions were so strong that he did not hesitate when he deemed such a departure to be for the common good to abandon a political party for the purpose of affiliating with another, whose principles and policies, in his judgment, would best serve the interests of the whole people, and his motives were never questioned. He was a Republican for many years, but upon the organization of the Greenback party he became an adherent of its doctrines and published a book on finance, entitled "The Money Question" of which three editions were issued. Early in life he became a member of the Methodist church.

He died January 17, 1902, leaving his wife and two daughters, Mrs. Emma Berkey Jones of Grand Rapids, and Mrs. Lydia Wealthy Neely of Muncie, Indiana.