

E.C.A. BECKER

(April* 30, 1855 – March 15, 1907)



The “E. C. A.” stood for Edward Carl Anton, but Becker preferred using just the initials of his first and middle names. A native Midwesterner, Becker was born in the small city of Peoria, Illinois, where six months earlier Abraham Lincoln had argued with intelligence, conviction, and reason against slavery in what became known as the “Peoria Speech.”

Becker’s parents, John P. Becker and Eva K. Goldstein, were among the thousands of German immigrants who made a new home in the central United States before the Civil War.

Educated in the Peoria public schools, Becker left high school after his second year to try his hand at farming. What he discovered was that he was better suited to a different line of work, one that he believed offered better prospects for attaining moderate levels of financial stability and personal comfort.

When Becker returned to school in Peoria, he enrolled at Cole’s

Business College, where students could “secure a practical education.” On December 30, 1876, Becker married Mary Charlotte Vogelgesang; the couple had at least five children, three girls followed by two boys.

After teaching and serving as the principal of Cole’s, Becker and J. A. Griffin purchased Rockford Business College in Rockford, Illinois,** renaming it Becker’s Business College. In 1881, Becker and Griffin sold their college, and Becker moved east, first to Pennsylvania and, in 1883, to Worcester, where he became a teacher of, among other subjects, business penmanship at Hinman’s Business College, located at 424 Main Street.

Within four years of his arrival at Worcester, Becker established his own business school, using again the name Becker’s Business College. The school opened in either April or October of 1887 in a couple of rooms above The Boston Store, or Denholm & McKay, on Main Street. Women as well as men were welcome from the start. Becker’s school grew so rapidly that before long it occupied more than one floor at the original location, was incorporated, and then moved to several floors at 98 Front Street.

Becker promoted the College through advertisements in local publications, including school newspapers such as Leicester Academy’s *The Owl*, and a number of colorful brochures that emphasized the importance of preparation, practice, and practicality to success. Becker’s College was the first in Worcester to offer training in “type-writing” through a class that combined typing with shorthand. Moreover, students were trained on a diversity of typewriters, rather than a single model, so they would be better prepared for the actualities of the working world.

Recognized as a talented teacher and an excellent businessman with a quiet sense of humor, Becker died of heart disease on March 15, 1907, at the age of 51. His wife Mary assumed his many responsibilities and, with the help of their eldest child, Eva, and her husband, managed to preserve the notable commercial college that E. C. A. Becker had built.

*The exact month is in question.

**Opened in 1862, Rockford Business College was renamed Rockford