

# L. GRESSER IS DEAD IN BROOKLYN AT 84

**Former Borough President of  
Queens Succumbs While  
on Visit to His Son.**

**IN RETIREMENT SINCE 1911**

**Withdrew From Public Life  
After Removal From Office  
by Governor Dix.**

Lawrence Gresser, Borough President of Queens from 1908 to 1911, died yesterday morning in the rectory of the Roman Catholic Church of the Holy Family, 205 Fourteenth Street, Brooklyn. He had gone there to visit his son, the Rev. John S. Gresser, pastor of the church, last week and suffered a cold which confined him to the rectory.

Mr. Gresser was in his eighty-fifth year. Since the death of his wife last May he had lived with his other son, Justice Lawrence T. Gresser of the Court of Special Sessions, at the latter's home, 89-19 187th Place, Hollis.

The former Borough President of Queens had withdrawn from public life since his removal from office by Governor John A. Dix for "neglect of duty" on Sept. 26, 1911. His removal followed a long fight in which Mr. Gresser staunchly defended his record in office. His friends have always believed he was the victim of a political plot.

#### **Had Been Works Commissioner.**

Mr. Gresser's predecessor in office, Joseph Bermel, suddenly resigned in April, 1908, after charges had been filed against him with Governor Charles E. Hughes and just as the Queens grand jury was starting an investigation. Mr. Bermel's Commissioner of Public Works, Mr. Gresser, was selected by the Queens Aldermen to fill out the term. The next year he was elected to a full term on an independent ticket.

Following Mr. Gresser's removal, Maurice E. Connelly, then a young magistrate, was selected by the Alderman to complete the term. After sixteen years of political rule, Mr. Connelly resigned under fire and was later convicted in the Queens sewer scandal.

During his first months as Borough President, Mr. Gresser gained a reputation as a reformer. He had been in political life since 1896 and was known as "Honest Larry." In 1910 charges were lodged against him with Governor Hughes, who appointed Samuel H. Ordway a commissioner to investigate.

Preliminary investigations of the Gresser administration were made by Raymond B. Fosdick, Commissioner of Accounts under Mayor Gaynor. A total of ninety-five indictments were found against twenty-one persons in the employ of Queens. Others outside the government were indicted, including John M. Phillips, a former undersheriff, who was then a contractor and was later to become famous as the sewer pipe king in the Connelly scandals.

Mayor William J. Gaynor and Controller William E. Prendergast were among those who stood by the Borough President, as did many Queens citizens. In June, 1911, Mr. Ordway recommended the removal of Mr. Gresser. Governor Dix, in finding the Borough President had failed in his duty to protect the city and the Borough of Queens against "fraud and corruption on the part of his subordinates," said in his memorandum that "apparently a large proportion of the subordinates of the Borough President were corrupt and inefficient."

#### **Began as a Shoemaker.**

Born in Bavaria, Germany, on Jan. 1, 1851, Mr. Gresser was brought to this country when he was 2. The family settled in Manhattan and he was educated in the parochial school of the Holy Redemer. At 12 he went to work in a lithograph shop and four years later learned the shoemaker's trade. He married at 18 and set himself up in the shoe manufacturing business and two years later moved his factory to Brooklyn. He settled in Glendale and resided there for many years. His first public office was collector of the Newtown Board of Health. In 1906 he became Commissioner of Public Works.

Mr. Gresser's first wife was Margaret Beck. Three years after her death in 1901 he married Kathryn Beechinor.

Funeral services will be held Friday at 10 o'clock in St. Gerard's Roman Catholic Church, Hollis. Burial will be in St. John's Cemetery, Mid-Village, Queens.