

Some Memories

Herald Of Austin Meigs

9-18-1931
I remember very well the first time I saw Austin Meigs. It was April 1st, 1891, the day of the funeral of Hon. J. B. Grinnell. The roads were never worse than they were on that day. There had been rains followed by a hard freeze and the streets were cut into ruts and cross ruts and travel by team was impossible. The roads were so bad that Mr. Grinnell's body was carried to the cemetery by men on the sidewalk. It was impossible for a team from Malcom to reach Grinnell for the funeral.

The writer was an usher that afternoon and somewhat late two men, strangers to him, came into the church and it was the writer's task to find these strangers a seat. The church was crowded to the limit but two seats were found in a fairly comfortable place. These two men were Austin Meigs and Merrill Meigs who was Austin's senior in age. After the service was over they stepped up to the usher and thanked him for his effort he had made to find them a seat. They stated they were friends of Mr. Grinnell and appreciated the opportunity of being present at the service and hearing the kind words that were said of him. As they were unable to drive they came on the afternoon train, thus causing them to come in late.

Of the two men Austin Meigs was probably about forty, large, well built, striking in appearance and would be called anywhere a handsome man. His brother, Merrill, was shorter but more heavily built and both were appreciative of the courtesy tendered them.

It may seem strange that the writer had lived sixteen years in Grinnell and had not met any of the Meigs brothers. He knew of them, and of their standing in the Malcom community but their paths had never crossed. In after years we met all of them frequently and it was always a pleasure to meet and to talk with these fair minded, honorable and just men.

At that time there was a controversy between Grinnell and Malcom over the recent relocation of the Malcom Fair. A good many Malcom people were very bitter at the Grinnellites who were active participants in the purchase of stock in the Agricultural Society. The writer had just come into the Grinnell Herald and had refused to be drawn into the controversy over a matter which we had no part in and no particular interest.

There was probably some feeling among the Meigs boys in Malcom over this purchase but they were all so fair minded and too just to feel that the purchase of this stock in Grinnell was unfair.

Many times in after years we met Austin Meigs, always gladly, always with a warm heart and the feeling that he and the other Meigs brothers were among the noblemen of Poweshiek county.

The original Meigs homestead was on No. 32 just northwest of Malcom. The building of the Rock Island railroad changed the location of this community and the business men of the hamlet on the hill on the old state road moved to the new Malcom. Beginning with the location of the town of Malcom where it now is in 1863 for fifty years some member of the Meigs family was a resident and as long as they lived they were actively engaged in business.

There were four of these men, all sons of Church Meigs, a native of Lyndon, Vermont, who came here in 1854 and settled on section eleven in Malcom township, and his family followed.

Looking backward in the light of history we should say there would be no Malcom, at least not the real Malcom of those earlier years, without the manly integrity, honorable character and quiet determination of the Meigs Bros.

The funeral of Austin was held at Malcom Thursday afternoon at the Presbyterian church at two o'clock. It was a large funeral. The old timers loved the Meigs family. The later arrivals could not help but honor their integrity, public spirit and manly devotion to the rights of their fellowmen.

The burial was with Masonic ceremonies in charge of C. B. Hayes, worshipful master of the Grinnell lodge. A few others from Grinnell attending were O. Dale Smith, A. F. Swaney, J. W. Rehder, A. J. Neely and W. G. Ray.

The bearers were all members of the Malcom lodge. Mr. Meigs was a member of both the Blue lodge and of the Chapter.

Mrs. Meigs was unable to accompany the body to Grinnell.

In the death of Austin P. Meigs the last of the family in this section has passed away. For a good many years their name has been a cherished memory to Malcom people and it will be many years yet before the attractive manly form and earnest character of Austin Meigs will be forgotten. All honor to his memory. We loved him because he was a man, because he was generous and courteous, because he had spirit and because he was endowed with a fine lovable character which made him admired by everyone who knew him.

Austin P. Meigs Passes Away

Former Honored Citizen of Malcom to be Buried Thursday at 2:00 O'clock With Masonic Honors

Word was received by friends in Malcom Sunday morning that Austin P. Meigs had passed away. He has been for a number of years living in California. The body will be accompanied to Malcom by his son, George, and the funeral will be held Thursday afternoon at 2:00 o'clock from the Presbyterian church at Malcom.

Mr. Meigs was born April 12, 1850, and with his father came to Poweshiek county, Malcom township, five years later. For over sixty years he was a resident of this county and was one of the outstanding, upright men whom all respected and whose sterling integrity all admired.

The body will reach Malcom Thursday morning on No. 8. The funeral will be in charge of the Masons of Malcom of which he was almost a life long member.

HERALD

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