

1900

Henry G. Little

If you lived in Grinnell between 1867 and 1900, you will remember Henry G. Little. His tall, powerful figure, crowned in his later days by a mass of white hair, his vigorous personality, his willingness to work for his town, made him one to be remembered. He was four times mayor of Grinnell. It was under his supervision that the cemetery was laid out and planted in its present form. He was a deacon in the Congregational church. His youth was spent in Hollis, N. H., in Wethersfield and Newington, Conn. In 1835 he came west to take up land where Kewanee, Ill. now stands. In the following year, he brought his young bride to a log cabin around which wolves howled. The community became a town. For a time, the Littles lived in Oberlin, where the eldest daughter Louise married Henry S. Viets, whom she met at college. The second daughter, Maude, graduated from Oberlin, and later, in Grinnell, married Jesse Macy.

Mr. Little loved the frontier, and his pioneering soul turned again to the west. In Grinnell, he found a town that was young, and educational advantages for his children. He built a large brick house where the President's house now stands. Only one dwelling stood then on the block, that of Deacon S. N. Bartlett, the grandfather of Miss Stella Bartlett. For a long time the Little home was the center of a joyous social life.

The third daughter, Elizabeth, attended college, and married J. P. Lyman, long a lawyer practicing in Grinnell. The fourth daughter, Fannie, graduated from Grinnell. She was very musical, and played the organ in the church. She married Dr. A. W. Alvord, of Battle Creek, Mich. The fifth daughter, Henrietta, married Dr. Will Holyoke. She had a beautiful soprano voice, and studied in Chicago. A son, Frank, died in youth.

There are six of Mr. Little's grandchildren now living. Harry and Sara Viets are in Long Beach, Henry G. Lyman practices law in Los Angeles, Thomas Holyoke is in business in Topeka, Katherine Macy Noyes lives in Urbana and Louise Alvord Meyers in Grinnell.

Mrs. Paul P. Meyers.

One of a series of
pioneer sketches
written during 75th
Jubilee celebration

1929

Nov 6 1900

HENRY GILMAN LITTLE.

Born - Grafton, New Hampshire, March 31, 1813.

Died - Grinnell, Iowa, Nov. 3, 1900. Such is the brief chronicle of a life which nearly spans the expiring century; and as a life which has also been conspicuous part and parcel with the great historic movements of our age and country...

The bravery of our national history is brought forcibly home to us when we reflect how nearly it is all comprised within the scope of this one man's life. He has been the contemporary of every president of the United States save only Washington. His revolutionary grandfather stood with the "unbattled fathers" at Lexington to fire the shot heard round the world...

It was a humble but a happy home from which Mr. Little went forth at the age of sixteen or seventeen, with his parents' blessing and but little else, to seek his fortune in the wide world. The rough little New Hampshire farm yielded but scantily returns to labor, and was soon too strait for the large family of energetic boys and girls.

In 1831 the young man, not yet twenty, cut loose from all family aid to make his way quite alone. For a few years he resided in Newington, Conn., laboring with hand or brain as opportunity offered, winning many friends, some of whom remain unto this day...

Allured by the attractions of the opening west, he came to Illinois in 1833, settling first in Peoria county, but removing ere long to Henry county, where he found more congenial neighbors. In 1835 he brought his young wife from the comforts and refinements of her Connecticut home to dwell in a log cabin of a single room on the edge of the boundless prairie...

Mr. Little entered with heart and soul and all the energy of his powerful frame and active mind into the life of the young community, which has now become the thriving and beautiful city of Keosauqua. Times were hard and luxuries were few. The heart-ache for tidings from the dear old Eastern home would be assuaged only at the cost of twenty-five cents for every letter and long weeks and months of waiting.

In 1860 Mr. Little removed his family to Oberlin, O., to secure college privileges for his older children, but his business interests remained in Illinois and to Keosauqua he returned after a few years. When the Civil War broke out he was chosen captain of the first volunteer company raised in Oberlin, but the state of his health at the time obliged him to most reluctantly decline the honor.

The removal to Grinnell in 1867, was due not alone to the educational advantages offered there. He loved the life of the frontier; he delighted in laying foundations in impressing his own positive personality upon the plastic form of the empire yet to be. Though he has loved his latest home and has labored with earnestness and devotion for the welfare of the state, and town, and church, and college, yet it has been clear that in a peculiar sense his heart has been still in the home of his early manhood, where he had stood shoulder to shoulder with those who became dear as his own soul while they fought together against the wilderness and planted the seeds of righteousness and law.

turning. He might have made the poet's words his own:

"I gazed upon my days and sought my kind, And did not deem my work in a world of men. Repeated sorrows dimmed somewhat the brightness of his spirit. The son in whom the father's hopes centered died on the threshold of manhood. In 1890 the cherished wife was taken from his side and business reverses added their crushing weight. Until 1893 the young son-in-law, Dr. Alvord of Battle Creek, Mich. The leisure of the last eight years of his life has been much occupied with the writing of reminiscences of early days in New Hampshire, a Connecticut, and Illinois. One series of articles has been gathered into a volume and there is to be found what has been called one of the most vivid, true and beautiful pictures of family life

three-fourths of a century ago in a typical New Hampshire community of the simple, earnest, religious type, which has appeared in print. Sketches of a similar sort relating to Newington, Conn., have been published in the Hartford Times, and a like service was done by the ready pen for Henry county, Ill., many articles having appeared in different newspapers of the county. Papers upon religious and historical subjects have also found place in The Advance and other periodicals.

To the church in Grinnell of which he was a member Mr. Little was a valued counsellor and at the time of his death he had been for many years its honored senior deacon. He was the father of eight children, two of whom died in early infancy. Five daughters survive him, Mrs. H. S. Viets, Mrs. Jesse Macy, and Mrs. J. P. Lyman, of Grinnell, Mrs. A. W. Alvord of Battle Creek, Mich., and Mrs. Henrietta Holyoke of Seattle, Washington. Seven grand children live to bless his memory.

The funeral services held in the large church in Grinnell were simple, impressive and beautiful. Words of affectionate remembrance were spoken by the pastor, W. Dr. Vitton, and Professor L. F. Ficker of the College. Prayer was offered by Professor S. J. Buck who made fitting mention of the absent daughters. Professor Cole, of the School of Music, aided at the organ, and sang a beautiful solo, "Just as I am, without sin." Mr. Little's favorite hymn was rendered with exquisite taste and feeling by Professor Olin. One only of the friends of the happy days in Illinois, Mr. W. W. Otis, now of Red Oak, Iowa, was able to be present.