

CHAPTER XIV

THE MEEKER MEMORIAL MUSEUM. ITS ORIGIN, ITS SPONSORS, AND ITS USEFUL MISSION IN THE PRESERVATION OF EARLY WELD HISTORY.

As the century that had witnessed the founding of Union Colony and the tragic death of its founder drew to a close, citizens of Greeley felt that a memorial to Nathan Meeker should find expression in some enduring manner. Early in the new century this thought took form when a group of women came together at the home of Mrs. A. W. Jones, May 8, 1900, and when, out of that meeting grew an organization that incorporated under the name of The Meeker Memorial Library Association. The incorporators were: Susan G. Adams, Emily H. Jones, Alice M. Johnson, Elizabeth Haynes, Josephine A. Cheeseman, Elizabeth Clark and Sarah Carr Hogarty

It was decided that the Memorial should take the form of a library and to this end the co-operation of all Women's Clubs was invited. The response was gratifying. The W. T. K. club started the fund with \$50 and set aside \$25 more to be used in furnishings. Rummage sales, fairs, teas and socials and even a minstrel show contributed and the fund grew rapidly. However, it so happened that during this time J. Max Clark had also been both active and successful in raising a fund for a public library, \$22,000 being in sight for the project. It did not take long for the two promoters to see that their interests could easily merge, nor long to reach an understanding whereby the Association was to furnish a room in the new library building according to its own ideas.

This was done, but after a time the thought of the Association began to grow away from the library idea and toward the wider idea of a Museum. There were so many pioneer relics that ought to be preserved and space in the new library building could not possibly house them. Besides, there was the original Meeker home from which the Meeker family had gone, never to return; should such a landmark be left to fall into decay, or pass into the hands of unsympathetic strangers?

THE MEEKER MUSEUM

The thought persisted and gained force and ended in the purchase of the Meeker property by the city of Greeley and the Association together, the city to hold title and the Association, for its \$1,000 contribution to have the use of the building for the housing of its rapidly increasing stock of pioneer relics. And thus the Museum emerged.

But by the time all this was accomplished the new century was in its 29th year. Fifty-nine years had passed since the founding of the colony and fifty since the tragic end of its founder. On October 1, 1929 the Meeker Memorial Museum was opened with impressive ceremonies. Professor A. B. Copeland, an educator in this community since 1882, was installed as curator, which position, with the aid of Mrs. Copeland, he held until his death, March 16, 1936. He was succeeded by George Hodgson who, with Mrs. Hodgson took control about four months later.

Miss Cornelia Hanna is President of the Association.

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WHAT IS TO BE SEEN IN THE MUSEUM.

More than two hundred years of change and development may be traced through the historical articles to be found in the Museum. The oldest article is a clock made in the year 1700. It surely is unlike anything ever seen by any one now living. It can lay claim to real magnificence being built of ebony inlaid with gold and with ornaments of bronze. But the feature that sets it apart from all clocks known to living man is the dial and its mechanism. This lies flat on the top of the clock, and is about the size of a large silver watch. There is but one hand; it is stationary, the dial moving under it to indicate the hour. This wonderful and valuable article came to the Museum through the will of the late W. A. Insinger.

The next oldest article is also a clock; but it is comparatively modern, being, perhaps, not more than a hundred and twenty-five years old. And next to this in point of age is a melodeon, a musical instrument with an interesting history. Next an old Wheeler & Wilson sewing machine, a very popular household

help in the middle of the Nineteenth century. But back of that should be placed the spinning wheel and reel, and the scythe and cradle for cutting grain. Dating anywhere along in the century and back of it is a collection of Confederate and U. S. coins and paper money, including the "shinplaster" that did service as fractional currency when gold and silver hid themselves away during the Civil War. A collection of guns of the type used by Civil War soldiers and early settlers bedeck one section of the wall, and beside them three swords, one belonging to Marshall Cook, another to a soldier and the other taken from a dead Indian. Also a strong chain called a wild horse clog and hobble, used in the taming of wild horses.

Of the more domestic and personal articles may be mentioned the side saddle used by the Meeker sisters for horseback riding; the churn for making the family butter; the blue dishes for the table; the desk said to have been used by Nathan Meeker; the blanket suit made by Josephine while in captivity, under the direction of the Indian women; some exquisite pieces of fancy work done by Rozene; and the small, square trunk belonging to Ralph. After the death of Rozene, the last of the family to go, the greater part of her collection of antique and near antique furniture was transferred to the Museum. Among these is a sideboard probably dating back to the Seventeenth century; and an eight foot mirror of a much more recent date. There are many portraits of early colonists, and other framed pictures.

Outside on the porch that shades the western and southern exposures of the building may be seen: two ox-yokes worn on the bowed necks of oxen that brought the wagon trains of the earliest settlers to Greeley; the ox-drawn plow that turned the first furrow on the colony grounds; it was the property of James Orr, a first colonist; a velocipede, the ancestor of the modern bicycle but wholly different, having one very large and one very small wheel with a seat at least six feet from the ground. And a section of log from the first court house and Post Office of Weld County. These are but a few of the many interesting things to be seen at the Museum.

THE MEEKER MUSEUM

Mrs. Maude Meeker Gilliland, a niece of Nathan Meeker, has frequently made contributions and has stated her intention of leaving her entire collection of rare historical relics to the Museum; she has gathered them over a period of years and will keep them in her own home while she lives. Others who have valuable historical articles have made like statements, so it is safe to predict that in the coming years the present building will not be large enough to shelter the treasures of the past.

The Museum with its grounds occupies the quarter block on Ninth avenue running from Fourteenth street on the south toward Thirteenth street on the north. It is open to the public every day from 2 to 5 P. M., with either Mr. or Mrs. Hodgson, or both in attendance. Classes from the schools are frequent visitors; and all visitors are welcome.