

[Seavey, William]

WILLIAM SEAVEY

By Cora W. Wilder

(from A Memorial Held in the Sunday School Rooms of St. Paul's Universalist Church, Victor, N.Y., June 30th, 1895.)

Will you turn with me the leaves of that life which began in the village of Pike, Wyoming county, New York, September 27th, 1812, and closed at Victor, February 22d, 1875, the life of William Seavey.

Whoever knew that Col. Seavey would almost know that the blood of New England flowed in his veins, for no one will say that he lacked the courage of his convictions. His father William Seavey was born near Concord, N.H., emigrating early in the century to western New York, then almost a wilderness. The family came to Victor from Pike about 1824 and Mr. Seavey was apprenticed to Azariah Bickford, who was at that time a blacksmith at East Bloomfield. After serving his time he opened a shop in Bristol Valley about three miles from Baptist Hill. About this time, 1836, he married from the (?) Homestead Mary Peck, who when a child, emigrated to Victor with her parents and little brothers from New Haven, Conn., making the long journey with an ox team. Her father cleared the forest for a farm and built a log house, two miles south of Victor.

About 1840 Mr. Seavey entered into partnership with Uriah Decker, opening a blacksmith shop in the forks of the road at the western edge of the village. A few years later he built the blacksmith shop which was destroyed by fire a year ago last winter. This shop had a public hall over it which was used for many years by the various secret and reform societies of the time. At one time the Masons, Odd Fellows, Sons of Temperance and Know Nothings met there.

I am indebted to his son for many of the facts here set forth and would still further quote his words: "Those were the times when the great questions before the public were slavery and temperance. My father was an ardent temperance man and antislavery advocate, a Republican deeply interested in the public schools, being a trustee for many years[,] a most zealous Universalist fond of arguing he subject with the patrons of his shop, many of whom were his best friends but of different religious faiths, and looking back it seems to me that my father was a typical spirit of the liberal and reformer of his day. He manifested a deep interest in the welfare, not only of the community in which he lived, but of the nation, and extended to foreign countries, particularly England and France. The leaders in the organization of the French Republic were household names and their portraits were upon the walls of our sitting room."

Col. Seavey was very fond of the military and his title was received from the local military organization to which he belonged.

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I quote again from another who knew him. "The subjoined toast was given by Col. Seavey at a Fourth of July celebration held in Victor in 1832. It has the true ring and was called out by some local opposition to celebrate.

"The Clergy—May they be ministers of peace, and not firebrands of sedition."

It was just like Mr. Seavey to rebuke thus fearlessly anything which in its spirit or tendency seemed wrong—no matter where it bit.

Such was the man like Peter after he became steadfast—it seems to me impulsive[,] fearless and true to conviction who took his stand in 1844, with the original members of our society and not a popular step in those days you must know, and labored for its upbuilding until called from among us.

Not having large means, it is the testimony of many witnesses that he was always ready to give for "the work of his hands" where the cause of education or of the church he loved so well could be advanced[.] He served many years as trustee in the old church on the hill, and was with Mr. Bickford and Mr. Ladd chosen to visit other churches to choose a plan for this new church.

For years his voice led in the singing and he did not grow too old to attend the Sunday school. Here I remember him and very distinctly I recall him on the last evening at the church. He looked very like his picture there, accepting that you might not suspect the ruddy cheek which he had. Heartily he joined in the service and keenly we felt the shock when the news came to us in the morning that he would worship with us no more.

From this strong life—developed and undeveloped, there has come into the world another life, led by the same earnest spirit which under more favorable conditions and more advanced times has made for itself a large place in the world, a place high among its fellows. It seems to me the crowning triumph of the life of the father is that he should have so lived and so labored in his humbler life and work as to have impressed the son with their dignity and worth. In the home of Lafayette W. Seavey, among the choicest art treasures there hangs his Coat of Arms arranged by his own artist hand, from the gloves, the apron and the tools which his father cast aside not knowing it was (?).

Shall we gather for our own profit the lessons which lie so near the surface?

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