

Alumni Section

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C. C. BEEKMAN, PIONEER

Much space today is given to a sketch of the life and activity of Hon. C. C. Beekman, a very good friend of the University of Oregon. Alumni and students naturally know him best through connection of his name with the Beekman oration prize. The University has known in Mr. Beekman a constant friend and supporter from the very beginning of the life of the institution. As a pioneer Regent, he helped to shape the early policies. Many a poor student from Southern Oregon has found Mr. Beekman at hand to furnish the aid necessary for completion of the college course. As a citizen of influence and standing, Mr. Beekman has often spoken a much needed word for higher education.

WHAT ABOUT IT?

Do you want Home Coming Day changed to the date of the O. A. C. Oregon game at Eugene next fall? If you do, please write in to the Secretary of the Alumni. Do you prefer to have the occasion arranged for some other day? If so, let your wishes be known. Last week we published a letter from some alumni at Salem who wished to have the Home Coming on the day of the game. Does this letter represent fairly the sentiment of the body of alumni? If so, there is little doubt that the change can be made. Let us hear from you.

THE UNIVERSITY HAS LOST A TRUE FRIEND

Hon. C. C. Beekman, Pioneer Banker and Early Regent, Dies at Jacksonville

Hon. C. C. Beekman, former member of the Board of Regents, and donor of the Beekman prize, died at his home in Jacksonville, February 23, and was buried in that city the following Friday. Dr. John Straub, as member of the faculty and old friend of Mr. Beekman's, attended the funeral as a representative of the University.

Mr. Beekman served as Regent from 1887 to 1903, resigning at the end of that period because of advancing age. He was exceedingly faithful and had the reputation of never being absent from a meeting of the board without adequate reasons.

Because of his being one of the last of the original pioneers and a prominent man in the community, his funeral was the largest that Jacksonville has ever seen. Stores throughout the town were closed and business everywhere suspended during the funeral.

Mr. Beekman leaves a widow, son and daughter. The son, Benjamin B. Beekman, was graduated in '84. He afterwards taught for a year in the University.

"He served the University long and faithfully, and we who knew him feel that the institution has lost a good friend," said President Campbell in connection with Mr. Beekman's death.

The Portland Telegram published the following sketch of the career of Mr. Beekman:

"Quaint old Jacksonville is in mourning. Its oldest citizen, its wealthiest resident, its pioneer banker is dead. Cornelius C. Beekman, the strangest banker the Pacific Coast ever had, is being buried today.

"Long before Portland amounted to a hill of beans, Jacksonville was a thriving mining camp, and C. C. Beekman, familiarly known as 'The Governor,' was its strong box. For 65 years Beekman lived in Jacksonville and had no desire to move away. Born in New Jersey, Beekman drifted to the Pacific Coast in the year of the gold rush and was engaged as express agent at Jacksonville. For years he crossed the Siskiyou mountains with his pack train loaded with gold dust, through a country filled with hostile Indians, and never lost an ounce of dust.

"It was about 1856 that Beekman established his bank, the most unique institution of its kind in the West. And until the day of his death, Monday, when he was 87 years old, the bank looked the same as when it was opened in the pioneer days when Jacksonville was a turbulent community, filled with hard working miners, slick gamblers and quiet Chinese.

"In the little, dingy room which was Beekman's bank, it is said that more than \$15,000,000 in gold dust had been weighed on the old-fashioned scales, and this immense amount of gold was safely conveyed through the Indian country to California by Beekman in person. Much of the gold came from Kanaka Flat, where even now a 'color' can be found by anyone who takes a pan of dirt and washes it. Long after the whites had considered the Flat worked out, the patient Chinese panned and washed fortunes from the soil.

"Mr. Beekman did banking on a system of his own. Behind his wooden counter he had a large drawer, and in this he kept his deposits when the vault was full. Beekman, in the early days, charged a commission for being custodian of dust, and he made a barrel of money in carrying the millions of dollars of dust to the mint in California. For many years, however, his method of handling deposits was peculiar. It was not uncommon for a customer to bring a deposit of, say \$5,000. Beekman would tie a tag customer's name to the sack and toss it in the bureau drawer. When the customer wanted his deposit, Beekman would open the drawer and hand back the sack—the original deposit, intact.

"The fewer times a deposit was handled the better Beekman liked it. If a customer deposited \$25,000, he was credited with that amount on a ledger, and when the customer wrote a check against it for \$10, that sum was charged off. But, if a customer started writing checks, Beekman would send for him and suggest that the deposit be withdrawn and sent to some commercial bank, as he had no desire to fuss with checks and book-keeping.

"At all times Beekman kept 100 per cent of the deposits on hand, and this is a record which probably no other bank in the country or the world ever attempted to make. No customer ever worried about Beekman's reserve, and in times of panic they had implicit confidence in the resources of the vault and the drawer in the desk. If you put your money in Beekman's keeping, it was there any time you wanted it, for Beekman, unlike other bankers, did not operate on the money of depositors. Beekman used only his own money and his bank was only a sort of accommodation for the community.

"And that little old bank of Beekman was respected by big city bankers, even though they didn't think much of his way of doing business, for more than once when big banks were pinched they did not call in vain on Beekman for assistance. His gold came in mighty handy in a couple of panics, and enabled some of the more progressive bankers to weather the storm.

"The bank itself resembled a curio shop. The walls were plastered with the signs of pioneer days, and the notices of Wells-Fargo. Upon the wooden counter, much scarred and carved with initials, stood the scales which in their day had weighed most of the gold dust that was taken from the soil surrounding Jacksonville. At night an old-fashioned coaloil lamp was the source of illumination. It cast a sickly gleam and the bank appeared more gloomy and dingy than ever in the evening. There were no regular banking hours. There were no frills about Beekman's bank, but it was as solid as a rock, and no one ever lost a cent intrusted to the venerable financier.

"Ostentation and Beekman were strangers. He was as unassuming as an old shoe. He paid the expenses of his own church at Jacksonville, and did so without giving the impression that he was doing anything. If the kids wanted an outfit for baseball, 'The Governor' saw that they were equipped. Beekman, when he did business, decided largely on his judgment of human nature. The man whom he had confidence in had no difficulty in obtaining a loan, and Beekman did not press the collection.

"There is many a young man in Southern Oregon who received a college education through the assistance of Beekman, and legend has it that Beekman never had his confidence

misplaced in any of these proteges. A number of years ago a young man from Jacksonville had to bring his wife to Portland for an operation. He was soon reduced to the point where he did not have enough money left to eat, to say nothing of paying hospital and nurse bills. In his distress he wrote to Beekman for \$250. The money came in the return mail, with a blank note and the request that the young man fill out the note to suit himself. Followed then a long period of struggle, and it was seven years before the young man could repay Beekman, which he did, plus the interest. Beekman promptly returned the interest, retaining only the principal.

"The site on which the thriving city of Medford now stands, Beekman swapped for a horse and buggy. The site of the library was sold to that municipality when, at the time, Beekman could have received several thousand dollars for it. Beekman was ever interested in the cause of education, and he established the Beekman Fund at the University of Oregon to assist deserving students.

"Only once did Beekman ever aspire to public office. He was the republican candidate for Governor, and was defeated by Governor Thayer, who was on the Democratic ticket. Beekman lost by less than 100 votes. Thomas G. Reames, father of United States District Attorney Clarence Reames, was a partner of Beekman for several years, and when Beekman was candidate for Governor, Reames was the Democratic nominee for Secretary of State, and he, too, was defeated by a handful of votes.

"In later years it became the custom in Medford when any distinguished visitor arrived, to take him over to Jacksonville to meet Beekman, who enjoyed these visits and never wearied of drawing on his memory, for he knew the history of Southern Oregon and the good, old gold days as no other man."

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