

MEIGS, RETURN ROBERT

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"RETURN ROBERT MEIGS".

Return Robert Meigs was born June 21, 1846, at Park Hill at the home of his maternal grandfather, which (home) was called Rose Cottage. His parents were Return Jonathan Meigs and Jane Moss, daughter of Chief John Ross and his first wife, a Cherokee woman named Quatie.

Before the birth of Return Robert his parents lived in a brick house at the site now known as the Boulinot place near the Illinois river, about four miles northeast of Tahlequah. This house was later burned during the Civil War. The family later removed to the Cunningham place near the Park Hill Creek, about two miles southeast of the present village of Park Hill. They next moved to the large two-story log house at Park Hill, where Return Robert spent his boyhood.

He recalls many incidents that happened during his early childhood. On one occasion at about the age of four years he was riding behind his mother on the family pony, Pompey, which ran

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away with them without damage being done. He recalls that he ran foot-races with Mary Covell, later Mrs. Holderman.

He attended school at the Park Hill Presbyterian Mission, and among the pupils at that time was Alice, Grace and Augusta Robertson grand-daughters of Reverend Samuel A. Worcester and wife. Alice later became Congresswoman.

Mr. Meigs also recalls the occasion of his father leaving in 1849 for California, the year of the gold rush. On the morning of the day he left, regular devotions were held, the 37th psalm being read and prayer offered. His father left home in a covered wagon drawn by several teams of mules, taking with him such implements as would be needed, including shovels, spades, a large supply of food and various other commodities. He met the fate of many others, who never reached their goal, dying of cholera near Salt Lake City, Utah, where he was buried.

Mr. Meigs relates that on one occasion during the Civil War a number of Confederate soldiers

arrived at his home and fearful for his life, Return Robert hastily scrambled up the chimney, where he remained during the time his step-father was killed and an attempt made to burn the house. Some cotton that was on the porch was ignited, but the women of the home managed to extinguish the flames. The resulting smoke stains may be seen today, it is said. (The same evening Chief Ross' residence at Park Hill, resembling the mansion houses of the Old South was burned.) The soldiers having started on their way, Return Robert came down from his cramped quarters and ran for his life. Mistaking a pair of mule's ears for two bayonets, he swerved aside in the darkness; frightened, the mule turned and both ran in the same direction. Return Robert reputedly kept so near he could have touched the mule. During the flight, he lost a shoe and sock, painfully wounding a bare foot. He spent the remainder of the night near the old Methodist Sehon Chapel, in view of his home. Next day he helped dig his step-father's grave in the Ross Cemetery.

It was after this period that he removed with his mother to Pennsylvania, where he worked at Bethlehem in a steel foundry for some time. During this time he attended night school and helped bear the expenses of

educating two small orphaned cousins.

Shortly after the close of the war he returned to the Cherokee Nation, where he lived with his mother at the old family home at Park Hill. In the early seventies he was married to Jenny Ross, daughter of Daniel and Naomi Ross.

In the early eighties he built a small log house more than a mile from his mother's home, hauling the stone for a fireplace and chimney from an old chimney given to him by his mother. He later built more rooms resulting in a comfortable house. In 1890 he hauled sand stones of a cream color from Wild Horse prairie several miles southwest of his home, from which new chimneys were constructed by an Irishman named Pat Haggerty.

In September, 1882, his wife died, leaving two sons and a daughter, all of whom are living.

In the Fall of 1884 he married Miss Christina Helen Blevins of Evansville, Arkansas. To this union there were born three sons and three daughters, two of whom are living.

Mr. Meigs has engaged in extensive farming and

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stock raising, which included sheep. He served as a member of the National Council, being Speaker of the House. He served for many years as an elder in the Park Hill Presbyterian Church, until disabilities due to an extreme age prevented his participation. In recent years he has lived very quietly, having lost his eyesight and hearing to a great extent. He received a severe burn in the latter part of the winter of 1937. He remains in bed much of the time, but is able to arise and walk to his meals. He will have lived 91 years June 21, 1937.