



A. S. KINGMAN

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It is a pleasure to historize a pioneer of Polk County who so impressed his personality on the body politic and left a name so imperishably stamped upon it as Albert Smith Kingman, the founder of one of the beauty spots of the city—"Kingman Place." He was born in Riga, Monroe County, New York, October Eleventh, 1827, of Scotch-Irish ancestry, who emigrated to America in 1500, and settled in New York.

His parents were born in Hampshire County, Massachusetts. His mother, whose maiden name was Sophia Smith, was one of the family from whom the historic 'Smith Ferry' was named.

Albert's father was a farmer and a man of considerable prominence. He was a member of the Legislature of New York one term, declining a second term because of impaired health.

Albert passed his boyhood days on a farm, doing whatever he could, his principal stunt being to pick up stones and pile them up in fence rows to get them out of the way, which, in some of the old, rock-bound states was a continuous performance, for so soon as a field was cleared it was again covered. For variety, his father would send him to the woods to cut timber. One day, he found Albert's dinner pail hanging on a peg in the barn, empty. When he came back at night, his father said to him: "You had no dinner to-day." "Oh, yes, I did; I ate it before I started, to save carrying the pail," was the rejoinder.

When fifteen years old, he went to live with his grandparents, in Massachusetts, where he worked for his board and attended the common school, supplementing his studies with diligent reading and close observation of things in general. Later, he attended Williston Academy for Boys, where an ambition seized him to go to college. He tramped over the country, selling maps and charts, to earn money to pay his expenses while preparing to enter Amherst College.

When he became twenty, he said to his father one day: "Your father gave you your time long before you were twenty-one; can I have mine?" "Young man, any time you think you can do better away from home, you may go," was the response. He packed his belongings in a little satchel, and, with what money he had—his father gave him none—set his face toward Amherst. A younger cousin joined him, and together they did janitor work or whatever they could get, to earn means to defray their frugal expenses. They prepared their own meals, and often said they managed so as to have crackers and cheese, if nothing else.

When Albert had reached his majority, the whole country was stirred with the gold discoveries in California, and he had a strong desire to join the vast caravan headed that way, and see more of the country, but the cost was beyond his means. He had two uncles who were practicing law in Kentucky, and there he decided to go. He worked his way to the Mississippi River, where he got a job on a river boat and worked his passage to Hickman, Kentucky. A brief stay there convinced him that the South was not the place for him. Noticing his unsettled state of mind, his uncle said to him one day:

"Young man, you are just starting out in life. Let me give you some advice—the advice of L. A. Bruyert, an eminent French lawyer. If you want to succeed, avoid law suits beyond all things; they influence your conscience, impair your health, and dissipate your property."

Albert thought there was good in it, and he made it the rule of his life. Unsatisfied with the South, he decided to come West. Arriving at Adrian, Michigan, he found, when searching for work, two schoolmates of boyhood days, and they made a compact to go to California and get rich. They started on foot. The second day out, one of them said to Albert: "Suppose you are taken sick; you have no money. I have some, and I would have to pay your expenses; I will go no farther." He turned backward, and his chum joined him. Albert, undaunted by this showing of the white feather, went on, working a few days in different places to earn some money, until he reached Chicago. After a short respite there, he again started westward, and walked

to Fort Des Moines, arriving April First, 1850, with only fifty cents in his pocket. His gold fever had somewhat subsided, his purse was empty, his shoes worn out, his clothing dilapidated, and he decided to stop awhile and earn more money. His first job was with "Billy" Hughes, out on Four Mile Creek, at thirteen dollars a month and board. The board was far removed from the doughnut-and-pie variety of his boyhood days, for in those days there was very little to be had in Polk County but bacon, corn meal and dried apples. To add variety to the menu, one day, coming to The Fort for mail, he purchased a bottle of molasses, stuck it in his pocket, and when at the table would use a little of it, pass it to the next fellow, and then pocket it.

His next job was attending the ferry, just north of where Locust Street bridge is—there were no bridges. The rush of emigration was prodigious, the ferry often being so overcrowded that only the vehicles and people could be taken over, the cattle and horses having to swim. One day, the boat was so crowded he was knocked overboard. He could not swim, and came near drowning, but he grabbed the tail of an ox, which pulled him ashore.

He stuck to the ferry job until he had earned enough to purchase a small tract on the East Side—land was cheap then—and buy a yoke of oxen. He then hired with Eli. Mosier to break prairie, which business he followed until August, 1851, when he sold his East Side tract, and, with the money earned by prairie breaking, purchased from W. W. Williamson the tract now known as "Kingman Place," lying between University Avenue and Center and Twenty-eighth and Thirtieth streets, consisting of nearly one hundred acres, for which he paid four hundred dollars. He at once began clearing his land and preparing it for cultivation. When in suitable condition, he planted a nursery and fruit orchard, and for many years did an extensive and lucrative business in the nursery line. It was not long, however, before the westward progress of the town began to encroach upon his farm, and in 1887, he sold to Frank Sherman, who knew a good thing when he saw it, forty acres for forty thousand dollars. The same year, he donated a strip eighty feet wide through his entire farm, which is now Kingman Boulevard, soon to be

extended to Waveland Park, making one of the most splendid driving places in the city.

Sherman's purchase was platted into residence lots, streets and alleys, and thus was begun one of the beauty spots of the town.

Mr. Kingman selected two acres, now lying along Cottage Grove Avenue, and west of Twenty-eighth Street, for a home place, on which he had, soon after his purchase of the farm, erected a log house. In July, 1854, he wedded a niece of Eli. Mosier, and began housekeeping in the log house, with very little to satisfy an ambitious housekeeper. He made a table of plain boards on which they ate their frugal meals, two chairs given them by Mr. Mosier, a few dishes, a stove, and corn-shuck bed constituted the equipment. Later, the log house was supplanted by a fine residence, where he passed the remainder of his days, until his decease, in March. 1905.

It was not uncommon for him to shoot deer from the door of his log house, his gun always hanging on the wall ready for emergencies.

He was a diligent reader of good books. He loved nature, the waving fields, trees, flowers, birds, and music. The show and glitter of town life had little attraction for him, but the beauties of Art and Nature touched him deeply. Early, he set apart fifty acres remaining after the Sherman purchase to be kept for his children. He planted thereon the most beautiful trees he could find, the hard, or Rock Maple (*Acer saccharinum*), being his special favorite. Happily, he lived to enjoy the fruition of his labor, in the production of one of the most attractive residence tracts in the city, and it is charted on the map of the city as Kingman Boulevard Addition. On his decease, it was divided among his children.

Politically, he was a Republican, but he was not made up for a politician by taste nor adaptation.

Socially, he was of pleasing personality, thoroughly domestic in taste and habit. Love of home, family and friends were his chief incentives of action. His children were his confidants, and it was his dominant thought to make them feel that home was the best place on earth. He was genial, benevolent, and sympathetic. An incident characteristic of his sympathy, especially for

the needy, was manifested when he was working for Mr. Mosier, in the Winter of 1852. Mrs. Jane Swan, a widow, and daughter, Lucy, lived at an isolated place, at what is now the corner of Thirty-fifth and University Avenue. The weather was severe, and he discovered that they had great difficulty in getting fuel, and needed other assistance. He suggested to the mother that he make his home with them, and render them such help as he could. The following Winter, he was prostrated for many weeks with a severe attack of Typhoid Fever, during which he was carefully and tenderly nursed to convalescence by the mother and daughter. With them, he remained until his marriage. Later, the mother left town. Lucy married O. R. Jones, and went to Texas. In March, 1885, she returned, a widow, far advanced in years, without visible means of support. Kingman at once took her to his home, and during the Summer, built a small, comfortable house for her on his farm, where she lived care-free until the Spring of 1901, when she accidentally had an arm broken. He then secured a place for her in the Home for the Aged.

He was a liberal supporter of the church and school, and nearly continuously a Director, Trustee, or Treasurer of a School Board. He was not a member of any clubs or fraternal organizations.

Religiously, he had been trained by his parents in the faith of the so-called Orthodox Congregational Church, with which he united when young, but after coming West, did not place his membership with any church, for in his latter days he believed that true religion depends on facts; not on theory, but on acts. He was a Christian man, of most exemplary character, and a true type of the pioneers who lived and labored for the good of their posterity.

June Twenty-ninth, 1900, he divided among his twelve children five hundred and sixty-two acres of land, all in Polk County, and not a part of Kingman Place, reserving amply sufficient for himself and his mother, and, with contentment, waited the coming of the night which has no to-morrow.

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