

# BRADLEY B. MEEKER

(1813 - 1873)

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Bradley B. Meeker was nominated by President Taylor to be Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of Minnesota Territory on March 15, 1849, and the Senate confirmed him four days later. He took the oath of office in Minnesota on May 9, 1849. His four-year term expired on March 18, 1853, but because of confusion in the drafting of his presidential commissions, President Pierce found it necessary to "remove" him on April 5, 1853, when he submitted the nomination of Moses Sherburne to the Senate. Though out of office, Meeker remained in Minnesota, was elected a delegate to the constitutional convention in 1857, and pursued business interests in the state.

Meeker died in Milwaukee on February 19, 1873. The *Minnesota Pioneer* published a tribute to him, which was reprinted in the *Winona Herald* on February 28, 1873:

## THE WINONA HERALD

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Friday, Feb. 28, 1873

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### DEATH OF JUDGE MEEKER.

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Judge B. B. Meeker, of Minneapolis, died at the Plankington House, Milwaukee, on the 19th inst. of apoplexy.

Judge Meeker was about 55 years old. He came to Minnesota in 1848. He was one of the first Territorial Judges and organized the first Court in Hennepin county. He was a high toned public citizen, and has

been identified with various enterprises for the advancement of the growth of Minnesota. The Pioneer contains the following worthy tribute to his memory:

“There is not an old settler in Minnesota but knew Judge Meeker. He was one of the Associate United States Judges of Minnesota, from June 1st, 1848, until April 7th, 1858, to which position he was appointed by President Pierce. He was a native of Connecticut, and a near relative of Hon. Truman Smith, for one or more terms U. S. Senator from that State, and whose influence he owed for his appointment as Judge of the Territory of Minnesota.

Judge Meeker was a member of the Constitutional Convention, and held several other offices of responsibility and trust, both during the Territorial and State times. He was never married, and as far as we can learn left no relatives in this State. At an early day he invested in property at and around St. Anthony Falls, most of which he owned at the time of his death.

Judge Meeker was a gentleman of the old school. His decisions while on the bench were marked by clear and correct interpretations of the law, and many of them have been quoted to settle disputed points from time to time, in the practice of most lawyers of the State. An incorruptible Judge, a sound lawyer and a kindly gentleman has passed from earth, leaving behind but few who were his equals in all that goes to make up the noblest work of God, “an honest man.”

On April 15, 1873, a committee of the bar adopted resolutions honoring him, and the next day, upon motion of Horace Bigelow, they were read in a session of the Minnesota Supreme Court which ordered them entered upon the minutes of the Court:

State of Minnesota. Supreme Court.

General April Term A. D. 1873.

Wednesday morning 10 o'clock, April 16<sup>th</sup> A. D. 1873.  
Court convened pursuant to adjournment.

All the Justices being present.

On Motion of Horace R. Bigelow, Esq., the following Preamble and Resolutions were ordered to [be] entered upon the Minutes of this Court:

At a meeting of the bar of the State of Minnesota held in the City of St. Paul, on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of April, A. D. 1873, to take into consideration the death of the Hon. Bradley B. Meeker, formerly an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the Territory of Minnesota, Judge Isaac Atwater was called to the Chair, and Horace R. Bigelow, Esq., was chosen Secretary.

Charles E. Flandrau, Esq., announced to the meeting the death of Judge Meeker, and suggested that some appropriate Memorial of the deceased should be recorded by the bar.

Wherefrom, Judge Atwater called to the chair Greenleaf Clark Esq., who then offered the following preamble and resolutions which were unanimously adopted.

Addresses were then made by gentlemen of the bar, and Homer R. Bigelow, Esq. was appointed to move the insertion of the preamble and resolutions in the Minutes of the Supreme Court of the State.

(signed) I. Atwater.  
Pres't.

H. R. Bigelow, Sec'y.

Whereas, since the last term of the Supreme Court of this State, the Honorable Bradley B. Meeker has deceased, who was an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the Territory of Minnesota for the first four years of its existence;

Therefore Resolved, that we have learned with deep regret of the death of Judge Meeker, who was an able and upright Judge, and whose learning and ability entitled him to a high stand as a lawyer and jurist.

Resolved, that in the death of Judge Meeker, the state has lost a valuable citizen, to whom it is much indebted for his labors in the cause of education and internal improvements, and in framing the fundamental law and early legislation of the State, and that we cherish his memory with gratitude and affection.

Resolved, that these resolutions (with the consent of the Supreme Court) be entered upon the Minutes of said Court and a copy thereof be forwarded to the friends of the deceased. □

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The Bar Memorial to Meeker can be found on pages 362-3 of the Supreme Court Minutes for the April Term, 1873. The clerk's handwritten Minutes are filed at the Minnesota Historical Society.

For related articles, see "Documents Regarding the Terms of the Justices of Minnesota Territory, Part One" 17-18, 26-29 (MLHP, 2009-2010); "Documents: Part Two-B" (posting Meeker's three commissions, the Territorial Supreme Court's order on August 15, 1854, dismissing his challenge to his removal, and other documents (MLHP, 2009-2010); "Documents: Part Three" 24-33 (MLHP, 2009-2010) (posting Meeker's "Letter to the Public," contending that his "removal" was improper); and John Fletcher Williams, "Memoir of Judge B. B. Meeker" (MLHP, 2009)(first pub. ca. 1873). For a newspaper account of the first court session on April 4, 1853, in Hennepin County over which Meeker presided — and which most certainly occurred after the expiration of his four-year term — see "The First Court Session in Hennepin County" (MLHP, 2012). ■