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AUSTIN SEWARD.

Read before the Monroe County Historical Society by H. C. Duncan, March 27, 1908.

IN the Dunn burying-ground in the college [Indiana University] campus is a monument* giving the date of the birth and death of three sisters who sleep within its enclosure. Eleanor Dunn, born in 1754, Jennett Irvin, born in 1761 and Agnes Alexander, born in 1763. Their maiden name was Brewster. They were Scotch Presbyterians, were of the landed Virginia aristocracy, strong patriots, and their father was at the battle of the Cowpens and with General Greene's army in the South. They came to Kentucky in the great Presbyterian hegira about 1783. They were experts in the manufacture of woolen cloth, and during the war their loom was always filled with cloth for the army, and, when it was near enough, they helped to supply the soldiers with food. They all died in this county, widows; the husbands of two died in Kentucky. From these three women descended the Dunns, Alexanders, Sewards and Maxwells of this county.

Jennett Brewster Irvin was the widow of Samuel Irvin, a Revolutionary soldier and of the War of 1812, who died and was buried at Corydon. The story is told that while Irvin was in the war, she was courted by a Mr. Campbell, who asked her hand in marriage but was refused for her soldier lover. After her marriage they all came West, the Campbells settling in the neighborhood of Lexington, Ky., probably in Bourbon county, and the Irvins in Richmond, Madison county. Some of the Campbells moved to this county and were visited by this relative, who here again met his old Virginia sweetheart. But it is only with the Irvin part of the Brewster family this paper deals.

*This monument gives also the dedication of the burying-ground by George G. Dunn. It was erected by Austin Seward, about 1856.

Jane Irvin was the wife of Austin Seward. The Sewards were good people. In early times they came from England and settled in Surry county, Virginia, but subsequently the ancestors of Austin moved to Middlesex county on the south banks of the Rappahannock, in the heart of the landed aristocracy. They were Episcopalians and patriots. Austin Seward's father was John, and his mother Mary Daniel. It is thought she was a relative of the celebrated Daniel family of that State, of whom Senator Daniel is a distinguished member. His grandfather's name was Austin, for whom he was named, and his grandmother Almira Mason, a member of the distinguished Mason family. His oldest child, a daughter, was named Mary for his mother, and his second daughter, Almira, for his grandmother; his oldest son, John, for his father, and his son who died in infancy, Austin, for his grandfather.

John Seward, senior, had two children, Austin, who was born November 22, 1799, and a sister Almira, who was about two years his junior. When they were children his wife died and he remarried, and the stepmother mistreated the children in a way that "only exists in the story books," as a granddaughter expressed it. On account of her cruel and inhuman treatment, when the stepmother was away an aunt—Aunt Sheppard—the mother's sister, carried Almira away and she lived with this aunt and did not join her brother Austin until just prior to the Civil war, when she came to Indiana and made it her home until her death in 1867. It is a tradition in the family told by both Austin and his sister, that the stepmother's cruelty went to the extent of failing to give them enough to eat, both testifying that an old colored "mammy" from her own allowance of corn meal, and the oysters gathered by them from the tide water of the Rappahannock, cooked and fed them in her cabin. They both always insisted these were the best oysters they ever ate.

When Austin was about ten years old the family moved to a farm near Richmond, Ky. His father lived there about two years. The date of his death is not known. He was thought to be a man of very considerable means, at least his dress and manner of living, as remembered by his son Austin, would so indicate, but nothing whatever was realized from his estate by his

children. The home being broken up, Austin was apprenticed to learn blacksmithing. While learning the trade, shoeing a vicious horse, he was injured, causing a lameness from which he never recovered. He then learned edge-tool making with Anderson Wood, a noted toolmaker of Richmond, Ky., for whom he worked about two years.

On May 18, 1817, near Richmond, Ky., he was married to Jane Irvin, a daughter of Samuel Irvin and of Jennett Brewster Irvin, one of the colonial dames buried in the Dunn burying-ground. Samuel Irvin operated a tanyard about three miles from Richmond, was a prosperous, well-to-do citizen, lived in a large frame house and gave his daughters the best that Kentucky at that time afforded. They were fairly well educated, were skilled in all kinds of domestic and culinary labors, moved in the best society, and were well prepared to adorn a home and grace a cabin or a mansion.

Austin set up a shop at Hay's Ford on Silver creek about seven miles from Richmond, worked at the trade for about a year, then moved to Richmond and went to work in the shop of Argo & Caldwell as an edge-tool maker. His skill and reputation combined, enabled him to command the highest wages as a journeyman. The descendants of the other two colonial dames had moved to Indiana and had settled in and about Bloomington. There Mr. Seward paid them a visit in 1821. He learned the position they occupied in the new community, the influence they exerted, judged of the possible assistance they might render in a new country, and concluded to cast his lot with his kinsmen in the New Purchase. He arrived at Bloomington with his wife and two eldest children in September, 1821, moved into a vacant cabin on what is now the Oursler lots, which they occupied temporarily and soon moved into a pretentious building consisting of a double cabin, a loft and a lean-to, situated on the lot now occupied by the Batman building on the southwest corner of Seventh and Walnut streets. He immediately built a log shop on the same lot, in which he began his labor of supplying the wants of the community. The log shop was used until a new one was built on the east side of Walnut street in 1825. This was a one-story brick building of four rooms and is still stand-

ing, although with an added second story; one room was the gunsmith shop; one was used for storing material and for operating the lathe; one for grindstone and emery wheels and in the fourth was the blacksmith shop with three forges. It is thought this was the third brick house erected in Bloomington, preceded only by the old brick near Karsell's mill and the Maxwell, afterwards the Lucas House, burned some twenty years ago, situate just north of the alley on the west side of College avenue, between Sixth and Seventh streets. The brick was made and burned in Walnut street in front of Mrs. W. O. Fee's residence, wood cut on the neighboring lots supplying the fuel. There was a wooden structure built on the east side in which there was a horse-power for operating the lathe, grindstones and emery wheels that were used for polishing axes, scythes and other implements as required. As business kept on increasing, demands were made for more room, greater and larger facilities, and these an honest effort was always made to supply. Up to 1842 or 1843, Mr. Seward had only made forged articles such as were first heated and then formed on the anvil, but in a new country the plow proposition was always up. About that time a new plow called the "Peacock," from the name of the inventor, came on the market. I remember them very well. It had a steel share, wrought bar and cast mould board. In that day it was *the* plow, somewhat after the fashion of the Oliver of the present day. The Virginia furnace had been started on the west side of the county and it was hoped iron would be secured there to make and supply the demand for the Peacock plow. To that end Mr. Seward installed a foundry for the manufacture of all kinds of castings, the blast being supplied by horse-power. The use of this power was continued until 1854, when it was superseded by steam, which was used from that time on. The shop was enlarged, a foundry built, more forges installed and the capacity increased. In the early days but little money was paid for labor, or for the products of the field or shop. A system of exchange was established. The river—Louisville—was the market, and in order to dispose of the products received and exchanged for the products of the shop, he had a four-horse wagon made named "The Great Western," which made regular trips to the river, his

supplies and goods for the merchants being brought back on the return trips. This wagon was started in an early day and continued to run until the advent of the railroad in 1853.

A list of the articles manufactured and a schedule of the work done by Austin Seward would now be impossible. In order to get even a general idea, the location, the people, the country, the time and its needs must be considered. Bloomington is an inland town. Clear creek, Salt creek and White river could carry away the products of the county at certain seasons of the year, going with the current, but there were no boats plying any of these streams against the current. There were no canals accessible. The only way any kind of manufactured products could reach this locality was by wagon, and that during almost six months of the year, with great difficulty and often not at all. Austin Seward was a worker in metal. He was a blacksmith, a foundry man, a gunsmith, and, most of all, an edge-tool maker. A heavy forest was to be subdued and axes were required. A good ax is the work of an artist. It is said that some one told Henry Thoreau, in reply to some of his cynicisms, that it took civilization two hundred years to develop his ax. It took centuries to develop a Peacock plow. He could make them both. Over every fireplace hung a rifle gun. He made them. He hammered, bored and rifled the barrel from bar iron; made the locks, flint-locks at that, made the double triggers, cut a segment of a slick quarter* for the front sight, rounded out and set the hind sight, made the bullet moulds, stocked it with curly sugar wood, all with his own hands, and no gun could beat his for looks or business. But, as I said, a catalogue of the articles of his handiwork, the products of his shop, would be a catalogue of everything used in Indiana in which iron or steel entered. He made adzes, augers, braces, bits, bells, scythes, files, guns, knives, axes, sickles, shears—sheep shears being a specialty—plows, wagons, carts, horseshoes, horseshoe nails; he shod horses, mules and oxen, and, after his foundry was established, made threshing machines, stoves, skillets, sugar kettles, pots and cane mills. In 1861 he made and mounted a brass cannon. There are certain things at which he excelled. No better axes were ever

*A "slick quarter" was the old Spanish twenty-five cent piece worn smooth by much use.

made than came from his shop. They were forged on his anvils from bar iron and cast steel. It may be of interest to know that his old books show that a Mr. Barnes was credited by him with ax bar iron 3½ by ⅝ at 8 1-3 cents a pound, and cast steel at 30 cents. It was all hauled from Louisville in wagons.

His axes had a reputation which extended for miles. His son, W. B. Seward, informs me that he has known men to come horseback for more than one hundred miles to get an ax. Then he upset and resteeled axes, and, like Burns's good woman, made them "'most as good as new." Captain Fields, whom we all knew and remember, used to tell that when he was a boy, his father lived some sixty or seventy-five miles away from Bloomington; that he intended sending him to Mr. Seward's shop to get an ax upset. When it became noised through the country that he was going on this mission, the neighbors all brought their axes until he had as many axes to bring as he had miles to travel. And Seward's axes in looks compared with any "brought on," and in quality excelled them. He knew how to temper. The ax, the chopping ax, must be a certain shape and must be properly hung or it is no good. The steel must be heated just so hot. Nobody can tell how hot. Austin Seward knew. He had many journeymen who made axes in his shop, but of all he would yield the palm to but one man, a dissolute, drunken genius, named Richardson, who worked for him for years and whose presence was only tolerated by reason of his great and peculiar skill. William F. Browning says, "Nobody could equal Seward in making an ax, but Richardson; he could beat him." He was a great gunsmith and was the best offhand shot in the country. Charcoal was used exclusively in his forges and foundry until "stone coal," as it was called, was brought by rail. There was a wood-working department at which wagons were built, plows stocked and such other woodwork done as was necessary to turn out the finished product. The relation he and his business bore to the community is illustrated by what his old friend, Dr. Andrew Wylie, said when it was reported he was about to die. "This community," said Dr. Wylie, "can better spare any man in it, or the college every professor than it can spare Mr. Seward. We can get other citizens and college professors to

take their places without any trouble, but no man can take his place."

As a business man he would not be considered a success. In fact, as the world now looks on business, he was not a business man—certainly not in a financial way. With a genius for manufacturing, with a reputation he so early and justly acquired, with the business he had without competition, many men would have acquired a fortune. His sons, and he had a number of them, all were mechanics, supplementing him and each other. His oldest son, John, was a born machinist and an edge-tool maker. He could pattern anything on the anvil. He could and did command the highest wages. James was a blacksmith pure and simple. At the ordinary work on the anvil and at the forge it is said he could not be excelled. The same thing could be said of Robert. W. B. was a patternmaker. Irvin, a machinist, who always ran the lathe. Bricen, a gunsmith, and so on. In his own family he had the men necessary to carry on an extensive manufacturing business. When John became of age he was taken into partnership by his father; subsequently James was taken in, but no settlements or invoice made. They just stepped in. John concluded to try a new field of labor and just stepped down and out. Still no settlements, no adjustment. W. B. got old enough, the door opened and in he came on the same terms. The father feeling the infirmities of age, quit on the same terms, and William H., son of W. B., stepped in and took up the labors and assumed his share of the responsibilities and went ahead. No books were kept or settlements had as between the partners. They kept on in the same old Seward name with but slight variations as to "Sons," "Brothers" or "Company." And what is more remarkable, from the time that Austin Seward started his shop in 1821 until this time—eighty-six years, the establishment never failed, never settled with its creditors, never went into bankruptcy, never assigned, never was sued, and never sued except to collect an old account or to take judgment on a long past due note.

John, it is reported, said of his father, that if he had but one plow for sale and two came for it, one with the money and the other without, the latter got it. His reason was that a man with

money could buy a plow any place—the man without, couldn't. It was his Christian duty to help the helpless.

Of Austin Seward's domestic life much could be said. His wife was the daughter of a colonial dame. She had many relatives among the best of the community with whom she and her husband were on terms of the closest intimacy. They lived in the log cabin until 1828 when the old brick at the southwest corner of Seventh and Walnut streets—now the Batman block—was built and occupied as the family residence. At the time that was the most consequential house in town. It was brick, had two stories, and, what no other house aspired to or presumed to enjoy, it had a hall. In that house they lived until Mrs. Seward's death in 1865. They always kept open house. No one went from his door hungry. His business was large. He employed journeymen and always had apprentices. The latter always made his house their home, as well as nearly all the unmarried journeymen. They all ate at his table, sat at his fireside and slept in his beds. Of the patrons from a distance, nearly all stayed with him if their business kept them over night, while his neighbors or friends, who called on business or pleasure and were there at noon, stayed and took dinner. In "setting the table," there were always two extra plates laid for such as "just dropped in"—all without money and without price. Their table was always well supplied from the products of the country, exchanged for the products of the shop. Each, in fact, was a legal tender and freely taken in exchange for the other.

Their condition in life was as their neighbors. They endured the hardships and privations of the early pioneers. The household appointments were of the most primitive kind. Wearing apparel was largely home spun and made up in the house by women who came to sew. The household labors, cooking, washing, ironing and sewing fell wholly on such of the women of the household as were large enough to take up its burdens, with such help as could be procured in a new country. These labors—the labor of caring for a large household, besides caring for and rearing a family of nine children who grew to maturity, and two who died in infancy—made Mrs. Seward prematurely old and broken, although she always maintained a sunny and happy

disposition, looked well and faithfully to the household duties, and was indeed a helpmeet. She was well informed on all the issues of the day, was an authority on matters of history, and was reputed to be one of the most handsome women in the New Purchase.

Austin Seward was born in the center of the Virginia aristocracy holding to the Episcopalian church, and was baptized in that faith. When he emigrated to Kentucky he settled among Scotch Presbyterians and married into a family of Presbyterians; became a member of that faith, lived and died in it. He was intensely, but not demonstratively religious. In his own cabin he established and set up an altar at which he had family worship during the whole of his life, and in this cabin conducted the first Sunday-school in Bloomington. He was superintendent, treasurer, secretary, teacher—in fact everything, and rejoiced that he had for his pupils two governors of Indiana, Whitcomb and Wright, both of whom became also United States Senators.

On the separation of the Presbyterians into the old and new school, Austin Seward affiliated with the latter, and for years was a ruling elder. The "new school" church was the frame building just west of the Bowles Hotel, now occupied by the colored people. He was a regular attendant on all the ministrations of the church, led in prayer at the prayer-meetings and in the absence of the regular minister conducted the services. For years he took and read *The New York Observer* and *Christian Herald,* both Presbyterian papers, and had on his library table Scott's Commentaries, Barnes's Notes (this he originally took as a serial), besides many other religious works. The spare bedroom in his house was especially set apart to the priesthood, or rather the traveling preachers, and by the family was known as the "apostles' room." It took an overflow to profane that room to sacrilegious uses by permitting it to be occupied by any other than a member of the cloth. Until the day of his death he remained steadfast in the faith once delivered to the saints.

The Sewards and Brewsters were slave-owners in Virginia, although both families were opposed to the institution. Austin Seward was a Henry Clay Whig, and one of the many who went

into mourning on his idol's defeat in 1844. In 1843 he was a candidate for the legislature on the Whig ticket—the only time he was ever a candidate for office, but was defeated after a dirty and scurrilous campaign that reflected neither honor nor credit on his competitor or his supporters. On the disruption of the Whig party, he went naturally into the Republican party and remained in it to his death. He voted for Fremont in 1856. His house in those days was a sort of an impromptu Republican headquarters, while the pavement in front of his house was a typical town meeting. His early political teachings he received from the *Louisville Journal* at the feet of George D. Prentice. From that he went to the *Cincinnati Gazette* and the *Indianapolis Journal*. He also took the *Scientific American* and an agricultural paper. He always read the papers and skipped nothing, nearly always reading by candle-light which he held between himself and his paper. He was intensely loyal during the war. Every fiber of his being and every prayer of his heart was for a successful prosecution of the war and preservation of the Union. He and his friends furnished the material and he made and mounted a brass six-pound cannon which was used by the government during the war. The good, loyal people of the community, more especially the women, donated their old brass kettles, their brass andirons and candlesticks, and some women, extra zealous in the cause, contributed their brass hoopskirts, all of which was melted and moulded into this cannon. Two of his sons, with his consent and his blessings and with his prayers, were given to the Union army. The combination of his religious and political nature was such that during the war he literally observed all fast days and at all times observed all days of thanksgiving.

He and his family were musicians. He organized and was leader of the first band ever organized in Bloomington,—and for that matter in the New Purchase. To this from time to time all of his sons belonged. He built, at his own expense, a house for band practice, which was used also for years as a sort of dormitory for the shop hands.

He was a man of great industry. Carrying on his shop took no little time and attention. There was much to be seen after,

but he attended to it all and did also a man's work at the forge. When the new shop was built, one of the forges was his. When it was reconstructed and enlarged, he had his forge and kept it as long as he was connected with the business. During all of these years of labor—of hard labor—his hand never forgot its cunning.

In appearance Austin Seward was fair, had blue eyes, brown curly hair, was about five feet ten and a half inches high, slender and active, and notwithstanding his lameness, could get about with the best. His early education was limited, but by extensive reading and close observation, he became a fair scholar and a man of great and varied information. He could transact all of his business, conduct his correspondence and keep his books. That he was an ignorant man is disproved by the fact that on the establishment of the State Board of Agriculture in 1851, one of his old Sunday-school scholars, Governor Joseph A. Wright, appointed him a member, a position he honorably and satisfactorily filled. He was not a good speller; for instance, his son, W. B., tells me that in looking over his old books a few days ago, he found where he had charged a customer with a s-p-a-i-d.

He claimed among his most intimate friends and associates, the educated and most intelligent men of the community. He hunted and shot with Braynard R. Hall and Dr. David H. Maxwell; talked theology, philosophy and "shop" with Dr. Andrew Wylie; talked politics and discussed the affairs of State with Governor Whitcomb; agriculture and mechanics with Governor Wright, and heard gladly the humor, satire and eloquence of his kinsman, George Grundy Dunn, all of whom in a social way and as his equals, sat at his fireside and broke bread at his table.

From the time Austin Seward opened his shop in 1821 to the present time, their relations with labor have been the most friendly. There have been no strikes, boycotts or any other labor trouble. In the early days—in fact until recent years—there were always apprentices. I know now of but one living, William J. Alexander, commonly known as "Jim" Alexander, who worked with him for a quarter of a century, and who told me about Mr. and Mrs. Seward from the viewpoint of an apprentice and as a

journeyman. His statement is substantially as follows: Mr. Seward's apprentices served him four years, at a very meager wage, as was the custom in those days; but then they always came through as skilled workmen and able to earn the highest wages. They did not stay in and about the shop in a perfunctory way. doing the drudgery of the shop, the house and the stable, but were taught all that pertained to the trade. They made their home with his family, while Mrs. Seward herself saw they were properly supplied with clothing, that it was kept in good repair, and that their physical wants were supplied the same as those of her own children. The hours of labor were long—no eight or ten hours a day was recognized—but journeymen and apprentices were always given the benefit of all work done overtime. Mr. Seward was idolized and revered by every man in his employ. while Mrs. Seward was always by every "cub" and "jour" affectionately called "Mammy."

"Austin Seward was the biggest hearted man I ever saw. He made money—it was no trouble for him to make money, but he never collected, or if collected, it was given away," was his language. Mr. Seward was one of the largest subscribers for stock to the railroad, now the Monon, paid every dollar of it and all of it was lost. Soon after the old college was burned. Money was raised to save that and he was one of the heaviest contributors. That, too, was a total financial loss, but the university was retained. When on the separation of the Presbyterian church into the old and the new school, he went into the latter, he gave $500 toward buying a new church; the one which is now occupied by the A. M. E. Church just west of the Bowles Hotel. "Mammy" Seward afterwards said the hardest times she ever went through were when they had the loss by the railroad and made the donations to the college and to buying the church.

Before the advent of the railroad, the traveling was by horseback. All kinds of preachers stopped with him. Before they would go, one of the boys in the shop would be told to get out the horse, examine its hoofs, if not shod or if needing new shoes, to put them on—put it back in the stable and nothing said about it. If a man wanted an implement to work with he always got it

whether he had money or not. The boys who tended his team told him the corn was going too fast—in short, somebody was stealing it. Mr. Seward remonstrated with him for making such insinuations, saying that as long as he had corn, and any one hadn't it, he could get it by coming to him. The boys were insistent—some corn was arranged so that any disturbance would be noticed, and a single night verified their statement. A hole had been made in the door for the benefit of the cats. Mr. Seward fixed some kind of a trap and fastened it inside, locked the door, but left the hole for the cats. The next morning he found a man fast, unloosed him, filled his basket with corn, told him whenever he wanted any more to come to him and get all he wanted. One or two of the boys knew all about it, but he enjoined on them strict secrecy and never told it himself. At another time "Mammy" Seward found some one—a respectable man—stealing. She filled his basket and to assist him in concealing the crime, covered it with cobs and was terribly outraged at some of the boys who had been watching and knew of the theft.

When he first moved here he was universally called Seward, pronounced the usual way, but for some unknown reason, the name got changed to *Se*ward, with the e pronounced as long e and bearing the accent. An old paper in the hands of this society shows two advertised uncalled-for letters addressed to him under the phonetic spelling, A. C. Ward. It was no uncommon thing to see his name spelled in this way.

All of the family have died but two—Williamson Brewster, an honored member of our society and citizen of the State, and Robert D., who after fifty years' work at the anvil, with the respect and confidence of everybody, is now enjoying the rest he so well deserves and has so well earned. Austin Seward himself died October 27, 1872, and is buried in the Dunn burying-ground beside his wife and her sisters.

Braynard R. Hall, a Presbyterian preacher of Philadelphia, a graduate of Princeton, opened the State Seminary—the forerunner of the State University—in 1824, and remained until 1831. In 1843 he published a work in two volumes, entitled "The New

Purchase, or Seven Years in the Far West" under the *non de plume* of Robert Carleton. It is a very readable book, and, while largely overdrawn, gives a fair representation of this locality at that time. It is true, he puts impossible and unheard of language into the mouths of his characters and generally caricatures the people. He was a scholarly man, an eloquent preacher, but on account of trouble with Dr. Andrew Wylie, left in a huff and never was again reconciled to the country or the people. Every one except members of his own family, Dr. David H. Maxwell and Mr. Seward were ridiculed and lampooned. He gave all assumed names. Dr. Maxwell was Dr. Sylvanus and Mr. Seward was Vulcanus Allheart. To the latter is devoted a whole chapter of his book—the only man to whom was given a chapter. His enthusiastic and generous estimate of Mr. Seward's life and character can be summed up in his closing paragraph: "He was by birth a Virginian, by trade a blacksmith, by nature a gentleman, and by grace a Christian; if more need be said, he was a genius."