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JOHN BARTLETT MESERVE

By Grant Foreman

Once again the Oklahoma Historical Society is called upon to note the passing of another of its directors—one it can ill afford to lose. John Bartlett Meserve was elected a member of the Board of Directors on July 26, 1934, and since that time made himself an important member, whose efforts contributed materially to the conspicuous position achieved by the Society.

Mr. Meserve came to the board with high ideals and a valid sense of historical values. At the quarterly meetings, and on all other occasions, Mr. Meserve's judgment and advice were always constructive and sound. He had a high sense of the responsibilities of a director of this Society, and his counsel was always listened to with the respect to which it was entitled. He therefore became one of the most important members, and his loss will be grievously felt.

Mr. Meserve not only attended faithfully to the duties of a board member as long as his health permitted, but he often contributed excellent articles to the *Chronicles*. This work was principally in the field of biographical sketches of men whose stature gave them an important place in Oklahoma history. These adventures in biography entailed much labor and research for matter touching his subjects, which he had the capacity and zeal to incorporate in entertaining accounts with skill and literary competence that added much to the interest and scholarship of the magazine.

Mr. Meserve will not only be missed because of his high place in the councils of the Society, but his amiable, dignified personality and warm friendship, and his congenial contacts with the other members of the board accentuate the grief and feeling of loss with which we will all recall our friend.

Of distinguished lineage, John Bartlett Meserve, son of True Witcher Meserve and Atline Nancy Stearns Meserve, was born at Waterloo, Indiana, November 17, 1869, and went with his parents to Kansas the next year. His academic education was limited to high school. After his graduation, he taught school and read law for three years in the office of Burton and Moore, at Abilene, Kansas. Burton was at one time United States Senator from Kansas; Judge Moore, afterward district judge, was later annotater for the Supreme Court of Kansas. Mr. Meserve was admitted to the bar by the Kansas Supreme Court, and for ten years practiced law at Florence, Colorado. During his residence there he was city at-

torney, prosecuting attorney, and in 1903 was elected to the state legislature of Colorado. During that time also, on December 28, 1899, at Hutchinson, Kansas, he was married to Elizabeth Myrtle Broughton. Finding the elevation of Florence unfavorable to the health of Mrs. Meserve, in 1906 the family, then increased to three by the birth of a daughter, Naomi Helen Meserve, removed to Oklahoma and located at Tulsa, which continued to be their home, and where Mr. Meserve continued in the practice of law, except for a period of five years when he served as assistant United States District Attorney at Muskogee. His experience in this capacity covered the formative period of Oklahoma history, brought him many interesting contacts with the historical development of the state, and gave him an interesting participation in the solution of many undetermined questions of policy and Indian administration. Having acquired the vision of the government in its Indian policy, he aided in initiating and carrying through the courts much important litigation leading to the settlement of questions of profound interest and of wide application to Oklahoma's history.

After completing his service as assistant United States Attorney, Mr. Meserve returned to the general practice of law in Tulsa, during which time he assumed also the duties of attorney of that growing metropolis. Mr. Meserve's activities thus awakened and quickened his interest in Oklahoma history, giving him a broad and scholarly conception of historical values, with which he endowed the board on which he served with such conspicuous benefit to the Society. As a member of this board, it is a melancholy pleasure to testify to the sterling qualities and lovable personality of our departed member. One can not help feeling that he has left with us not only pleasant recollections but a heritage of good counsel and achievements by which he will long be remembered.

Mr. Meserve was a member of the Trinity Episcopal Church of Tulsa, the Sons of the American Revolution, and the Tulsa Club. He died on January 1, 1943, survived by his widow and his daughter, now the wife of Glenn Arthur Campbell of Tulsa. Funeral services were held for Mr. Meserve at the Trinity Episcopal Church at Tulsa, on January 4, 1943. Members of the board of directors of the Society attended to pay their last measure of tribute to their friend.