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Arthur Seligman

NECROLOGY

RICHARD L. YOUNG

THE Mesilla Valley and the State of New Mexico suffered the loss of a prominent, highly respected, public-spirited, and well loved citizen in the death of Richard L. Young, prominent lawyer of Las Cruces, on July 4th last, at the ripe age of seventy-two.

Mr. Young was born at Boonville, Missouri, in 1861, and was educated in the schools of St. Joseph. As a young man he was a steamboat pilot on the Mississippi river. Reasons of health induced him to come to New Mexico in 1888, where he entered the legal profession. Not long after his arrival he married Sue Cornelia Leedy, of Springfield, Missouri. He was at one time the law partner of A. B. Fall. In politics he was an ardent Democrat, but not an anxious seeker after public office. He twice refused the nomination of his party for United States Senator, but did serve as district attorney for the third judicial district. On one occasion he came within a few votes of being elected judge, and carried his own county of Doña Ana by a handsome majority, receiving the support of many Republican voters. He was a member of the first town board of Las Cruces in 1907, and officiated as chairman of the board during its second term. He was one of the chief promoters and organizers of the Elephant Butte Water Users' Association. He was a man of deep religious convictions and was a charter member and consistent supporter of St. Paul's Methodist Church in Las Cruces. His life was saddened by the unfortunate death of his only son, whose life was cut short by an accident shortly after his graduation from Yale University. At the time of his death, Mr. Young was devoting his business ability and high sense of public duty to the task of being president of the Board of Regents of the A. and M. College, during a peculiarly difficult time in its history. He is survived by his wife and an elder brother, Benjamin Young, of Sedalia, Missouri.

It would be impossible to express more fittingly in words the esteem in which Judge Young was held by his fellow citizens than in two obituary notices of him by distinguished members of his profession, Edwin Mechem and Numa C. Frenger.* Judge Mechem, a former political opponent, said in part:

We will not speak of his industry and ability, by which he became recognized as a civic leader and a jurist of the first order, but of his human side. . . . It seemed as though he had adopted the young people and children of the community. Many of the boys and girls who have been raised in this vicinity will ever hold him in affectionate memory for his friendly council and aid. While he held himself rigidly to his ideals of life and conduct he had a broad sympathy for the weaknesses and failings of others. . . . There was nothing narrow or bigoted about him. He granted to others the same right to their own ideas and principles, which he assumed for himself.

N. C. Frenger, now serving as judge of the third judicial district, wrote:

He loved his community and his State, and their interests were his. Always progressive, he earnestly strove for real and substantial advancement for his people and did not heed what might be extravagant, glamourous or evanescent. The glamour of public office did not appeal to him, but when a real service was to be performed he would accept positions of public trust. His services were always sound and characterized by the high order of integrity that was his. It should not be forgotten that as one of the first Mayors of our town he laid firm foundations whereby we have grown into a City of aggressive commercial strength and one of contented people. When the Elephant Butte project was first broached, it was Mr. Young who was outstanding in grasping its possibilities. To bring it into actual existence, seemingly insurmountable difficulties had to be overcome, and in the struggle for success, Mr. Young was ever in the forefront. In a very great measure we owe it to him that we now live in one of the best farming sections of our country. The welfare of our College was always close to his heart. It was under his inspiration that the Y. M. C. A.

* *Las Cruces Citizen*, July 6, 1933.

building was erected on the campus. During the past three years as a Regent of the College he has been tireless in guiding it through the many perils incident to the very depressed times we have been passing through. . . . Mr. Young will be missed by those of us who must remain yet awhile to carry on, but the good influences that he has left will guide and sustain us.

PERCY M. BALDWIN.

State College, N. Mex.

ARTHUR SELIGMAN

If ancestry, early training and environment ever predetermined the career of any man, such was the case with Arthur Seligman, the first native-born governor of New Mexico not of Spanish ancestry.

The father, Bernard Seligman, was a native of Germany, who before coming to America had been on the staff of the famous banking house of the Rothschilds in Frankfort-on-the Main. A college graduate, the father was a linguist of no mean pretensions, speaking English, German, French, Spanish, Italian, and Hebrew. After reaching the United States, he located in Philadelphia where he was interested in the manufacture of cotton goods. He arrived in Santa Fé in 1856, and in 1862 joined Sigmund Seligman who ten years previously had formed a mercantile partnership with Charles P. Clever, later territorial delegate to congress, to establish the firm of Seligman & Clever, which engaged extensively in a flourishing trade over the Santa Fé Trail. Bernard Seligman, a trained public speaker, rapidly gained political influence. He served in both houses of the legislature, was chairman for three terms of the board of county commissioners, was territorial treasurer, was a commissioner to the exposition in Vienna in 1872, and to the Paris Exposition in 1881. Before the establishment of the first bank in Santa Fé, the Seligman firm in addition to its mercantile activities engaged in private banking and was active in helping to finance the construction of what is now the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad to

Santa Fé. Bernard Seligman died in Philadelphia in 1903, at the age of 65. His son's career in a large measure paralleled his own.

The mother, née Frances Nusbaum, was the daughter of John Nusbaum, who founded one of the first department stores in America, at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, where his daughter was born. He was later proprietor of a similar store at Peoria, Illinois. The biographer of Frances Nusbaum states: "She was a noted beauty, highly educated and accomplished." In Santa Fé she took a notable part in civic and club activities and in doing charity work. She died only a year after her husband's demise. Her children were four: James L., of Santa Fé, Mrs. Eva Cohen of Philadelphia, Miss Minnie who died while attending college, and Arthur, the subject of this sketch.

Characteristic is the fact that there is a vagueness regarding the year of birth of Governor Seligman. Biographical reference works such as *The National Encyclopedia of American Biography* and *Who's Who in America* give it as June 14, 1873; a sketch of the firm of Seligman Bros. gives it as 1872, and both the application for membership in Montezuma Lodge, A. F. & A. M. and his application for Scottish Rite degrees, in his own handwriting, make the date 1871,—no doubt, the correct one. It is strange that, all through his life, there rose again and again similar vagueness as to his motives, decisions, and actions, making him a much misunderstood man and subjecting him to merciless and unjustified criticism.

He gives us glimpses of his boyhood days in a sketch which he recently wrote on his experiences as a collector of Navajo blankets. He says, for instance: "I recall that in my younger days I used to sit in the curio stores of Jake Gold and Abe Spiegelberg by the hour, trying to study and learn from them what constituted a good blanket," and again: "When a boy of twelve years of age, I was attracted to the Indians by their art, their picturesqueness and their love of color and harmony—I spent many of my vacation

days among the Indians. In those days our means of travel were either by horse and buggy, or a buckboard drawn by a pair of good mules. Often I was scolded by my father when I would come home with some Indian artifacts, such as moccasins, bows and arrows, baskets and a blanket or two, and well do I remember how my mother would insist that they be hung outdoors until the odor, in part at least, had been consumed by the air and sunlight." He says further: "I had often been told that the Indians would soon be a race of the past, and the selfish thought prevailed in me to acquire as many articles of their own make as I could. These, I felt in time, would be of value to those who thought as I did and would have some sentiment and feeling for their country and for our first inhabitants, who would like to have tokens of the first American, and preserve these evidences of their culture and their art for future generations." Thus he became a collector of Indian handicrafts, of paintings by Southwestern artists, of santos and historical relics such as old stage coaches, of stamps and coins, collections which still exist and, true to his prophesy, have increased in intrinsic value.

This brought him in intimate contact not only with the Indians but also with the Spanish-speaking people in the out-of-the-way plazas. Though brought up an aristocrat and fastidious in dress and food, he would mingle with these freely, share their simple meals and accept their primitive shelter.

Early thrown into political turmoil, he tells: "I used to go out campaigning with my father. Once a campaign was on and my father was running for Territorial Council, now known as State Senate. We traveled in a buggy, and our horses were tired. So we remained at Pojoaque for the night. Juan Bouquet and his good wife took us in, gave us a good supper and some good wine. We were shown to our room which had a comfortable bed but a dirt floor. On the floor beside the bed, Mrs. Bouquet had placed an Indian blanket. Next morning I told my father I wanted the blanket.

I asked Mrs. Bouquet if she would sell it to me, and she said she would; so I bought it for $3.50. My father tried to dissuade me as I had already spent too much on our trip. I still have the blanket. It is a very fine weave and color." Again exhibiting a life-long contradiction—a free spender, yet a good trader who would be punctilious even in small financial matters. As a banker, later, he spent large sums freely, and yet he would persistently keep after a debtor for a small obligation until it had been paid.

Acquiring a hand printing press and a modicum of type in trade as a boy, he set out to publish a newspaper, but with characteristic commercial instinct solicited advertising and subscriptions to back his boyishly idealistic utterances and political observations. A few copies of the paper are still in family possession, highly prized by them. As is the case with many men who have attained greatness or fame, Governor Seligman from boyhood had a great fascination for the other sex. He counted this an asset in political organization, assigning important places and tasks to women and commanding their loyalty and support to the last ditch at the polls. He loved social gayety and tells of an early experience: "At the time Fort Marcy was occupied, I used to attend the Post hops. One of the officers and his wife had been very kind to me and I felt indebted to them. After pondering long as to what I should give his wife as a birthday gift, I decided to take out of my collection a very nice saddler, a beautiful bayeta specimen. The officer was soon transferred to Washington, where ten years later I visited him. In going through their kitchen, I noted my beautiful saddle blanket on the floor in front of the kitchen range. It was so filled with grease and coal dust that it looked more like a squaw dress or a piece of rag carpet than it did an Indian saddle blanket. When we came back into the library, I noticed on the library table that some one had evidently dropped a lighted cigar and had burned in the table cover a hole about the size of half a dollar. I told my hostess that I thought she should have a new table cover

for her library table, and I would be willing to take an old Indian blanket that was on the floor in the kitchen, and for it she could go down to any of the stores and buy a new table cloth for her library table and send me the bill. Of course, she thought, I was playing a joke and to carry it out she sent me the blanket and a bill for $17.50 for the table cover. After a great many boilings, washings and cleanings, the blanket finally began to show up in its true colors, and the blanket is now one of the finest specimens in my collection." Again, the close observer, the shrewd trader, the keen politician, suave diplomat and gallant lady's man!

As chairman of the inaugural committees for more than thirty years, both for Democratic and Republican governors, he was expert in the niceties of these gala social events. He was one of the founders of the Santa Fé Club, for a time Santa Fé's leading social organization.

Public schools, private tutors, Swarthmore College Preparatory School (from which he graduated in 1887), and Pierce's Business College in Philadelphia, trained him for the business career which ran parallel with his political activities. President of Seligman Brothers Company for twenty-three years, president of the First National Bank at Santa Fé from 1924 until his death and for twenty-three years one of the directors, he was deep in many movements for the upbuilding of Santa Fé, most notably the community enterprise which resulted in construction of La Fonda, its famous tourist hotel, now part of the Harvey System.

His greatest financial undertaking, perhaps, was the settlement of the crushing indebtedness of Santa Fé county which had been incurred in the voting and issuing of railroad aid and court house bonds. Interest had been defaulted, property values throughout the county had dropped to the vanishing point on account of the debt, and the situation seemed hopeless. For years he persisted, calling to his aid men of prominence, lobbying in Washington and in the legislature at Santa Fé, pulling many strings until finally congress which had validated the debt, granted relief and

thus ushered in a new era of prosperity for the county and the state capital. His persistence and skill in this undertaking were characteristic of his career politically.

Enemies pointed to his friendship with prominent men of the Republican party as an inconsistency in one who professed unalterable allegiance to the Democratic party organization, but he made it serve the purpose which eventually brought his party and himself political triumph. It was his boast that he always voted the Democratic ticket straight, and yet his closest advisers in legislative matters were leading Republicans such as the late Charles A. Spiess, the late Charles Springer, Judge Edward R. Wright, Levi A. Hughes, Jan Van Houten, and other stalwart, conservative Republicans, while at the same time he counted as closest friend and counsellor, U. S. Senator Bronson M. Cutting, a Progressive Republican, who succeeded the late U. S. Senator A. A. Jones in his affections and admiration. It was Senator Cutting's return from Europe which he awaited anxiously in order to counsel with him over filling the vacant U. S. senatorship, although his political associates urged the governor to name himself and crown his own political career with this high office. His acquaintanceships and friendships among Democratic leaders were nation-wide, and he was highly regarded by them, sitting frequently in their most intimate councils. To many admirers, and often to the press, his reliance on men of opposite partisan opinion seemed inconsistent, but results proved it excellent generalship which snatched victory out of the very jaws of defeat.

Arthur Seligman often consented to vicarious sacrifice as a candidate for minor office in hopeless political campaigns in the face of certain defeat. Yet, he was astonishingly successful in winning against resourceful and powerful opposition in his own party, even oftener than against the forces of the Republican organization. His last victories, in being twice elected governor, were sweeping in every sense of the word, his majorities being greater than

had been deemed possible even by his own party friends. It seems that all the way in his political career he was compelled to fight against odds that would have frightened off most men. As mayor of Santa Fé, he succeeded in having the first street paving in the ancient and historic capital, many of whose property owners were bitterly opposed. Chairman of the board of county commissioners, chairman of the Democratic county and state committees, national committeeman, delegate to many state and national Democratic conventions, member of many important appointive boards, he astonished friend and foe alike with his grasp of political situations and his tireless efforts at creating and maintaining partisan organization.[1]

As governor he came upon the difficult period of the depression. The height of his ambition was fiscal reform—his endeavor to balance the budget was almost fanatical in its zeal. His greatest triumph apparently came when the figures were submitted showing that the state budget was balanced. His deepest chagrin followed when, shortly before his death, it was evident to him that budget balancing

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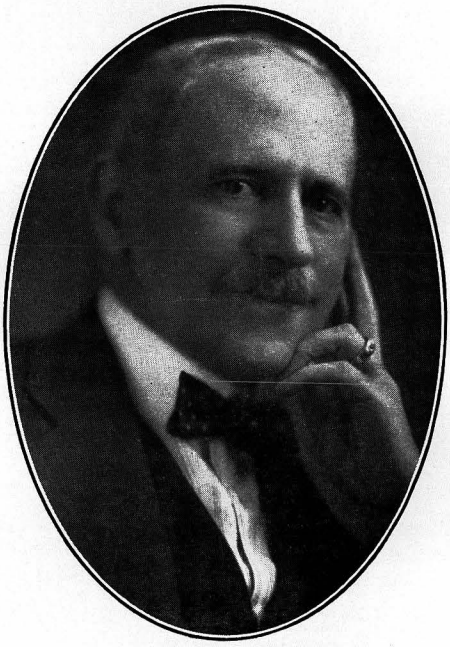
1. Among the positions held by him were:
Mayor of Santa Fé, 1910-1912.
Chairman board of county commissioners in which position he was instrumental in the building of a modern county jail and replacing the old wooden bridges across the Santa Fé river with concrete and stone structures.
Chairman of the Santa Fé council of defense during the Great War.
Chairman of the county war savings board.
Chairman of the county road board.
President Santa Fé merchants association.
Director northern New Mexico loan association.
Chairman exposition boards from New Mexico for the Pan-American exposition at Buffalo, and the St. Louis exposition.
Member of territorial and state boards of equalization.
Chairman democratic county committee for six years.
Chairman democratic city committee for eight years.
Member territorial democratic committee for sixteen years, part of the time as chairman.
Member state democratic committee for ten years, part of the time as chairman.
Delegate to the national democratic conventions in 1916, 1920, 1924, and 1932.
Member democratic national committee since 1920.
Member state irrigation commission.
Member of state educational survey.
Elected governor of New Mexico for two years in 1930, and re-elected in 1932 for two years.



THE LATE ARTHUR SELIGMAN
(Governor, 1931-33)

was merely a matter of bookkeeping; that after all, the tax rate would have to be increased; that cutting off twenty-five per cent from the legally made appropriations to institutions, which at their best were sparsely provided for, was not far from repudiation, and had no effect of consequence on the tax rate. He learned from bitter experience, and acknowledged it to his intimates, that after all it takes money to run a modern state, to give the people and the press a fraction of what they wanted, asked, and clamored for, when it appertained to their own locality and environment or their personal affairs. He looked with doubt upon the vast expenditures authorized by Washington but was eager to secure as much for the state and its people as was obtainable in the grand rush for public funds, which he knew too well must eventually come out of the pockets of the tax payers. While he held down expenditures to the minimum where he had the power, he never stinted the institutions which provided for the deaf, the blind, the unfortunate. He was unalterable in his determination that these must be provided for, no matter how heavy the burden upon the tax payer. He also believed in the highway systems across the state. He took deep interest in developing the state's scenic wonders such as the Carlsbad Cavern and such institutions as the State Museum and the Historical Society which he felt brought more people, more capital, and more revenue to the State than most industries. He was a life-long member of the Historical Society and it was one of the few institutions for which he recommended an increased appropriation to the legislature.

Governor Seligman was not a religious man in the way of church membership or church attendance. His attitude toward church and ecclesiasts, however, was respectful and even reverent. He was a contributor to Jewish and Catholic charities and the Hebrew church in its press throughout the world made much of the fact that he was of Jewish descent.

In addition to being a 32d degree Mason, he was a

member of the Benevolent Order of Elks and a number of civic associations, including the Santa Fé Chamber of Commerce.

Outside of his collections, Governor Seligman had few hobbies. He was an ardent baseball fan; he enjoyed motoring and took long motor trips, often at night, although he did not drive a car himself. He organized a Glider Club and was an aviation enthusiast. He rose late in the morning and retired very late at night, a habit which puzzled his friends and in which he persisted despite pleadings of family, urging of associates, and advice of physicians. It gave a tinge of unreality to his life and business activities. He offset this with a canny executive ability which enabled him to draft the best efforts of experts in formulating policies for him, working out problems, preparing data for addresses, and executing details. Far more than outward demeanor betrayed, Governor Seligman was sentimental, romantic, idealistic, and sensitive. While pretending to be inured to public criticism he was hurt to the quick by unjust newspaper comments, by treachery of those whom he had regarded as friends and whom he had helped in their days of need. He was intensely loyal to those who had given evidence of friendship for him and clung to them even in the face of fierce and continuous attacks and venomous criticism. Apparently dilatory at times, he was capable of swift and decisive action, as was manifested for instance just before his death, when he ordered the National Guard to Gallup to forestall destruction of property and bloodshed in a strike of coal miners.

It is too soon after his death to assign an exact place to Arthur Seligman in the New Mexico pantheon of more than a hundred governors. This much is true, however, that he was more than a mere politician, that he was a statesman, and that he is bound to rank high among the men born, reared, and attaining place of responsibility in the commonwealth of New Mexico.

On July 4, 1896, Arthur Seligman and Frankie E.

Harris were married, Mrs. Seligman established a congenial home of taste and refinement, and, although a leader in social and civic circles, made her husband's ambitions her chief aim in life.

Governor Seligman was stricken with an attack of angina pectoris at noon of Monday, September 25. He had left the Capital City, Santa Fé, that morning at nine o'clock, after a brief visit to the First National Bank. Over the telephone he discussed with Levi A. Hughes, chairman of the board of directors of the bank, several phases of the talk which he was to make that forenoon before the New Mexico Bankers Association at Albuquerque. He went over the same matter with the writer, and then, accompanied by George Bloom, assistant cashier of the bank, motored to Albuquerque and went directly to the Franciscan hotel where the bankers were in session. He was apparently in good health and made an impression of vigor and earnestness as he read his address which was enthusiastically received and in which he spoke both as a banker and as the chief executive of the commonwealth. He sat down by the side of James B. Read, Taos banker, who later that day was elected president of the association, and was listening to the latter's commendation of his address, when he put his hand to the region of the heart and remarked: "I feel a pain." Arising, the governor walked into the hallway where he met Oscar Love, Albuquerque banker, and again complained of being ill. Love accompanied the governor to the latter's room and called Dr. W. R. Lovelace, for many years physician to the Seligman family.

The medical man immediately recognized the seriousness of the attack, but despite all efforts, the stricken man sank rapidly into unconsciousness, arousing from his stupor only long enough to remark to State Bank Examiner Bingham: "What is all this commotion? I must hurry back to Santa Fé for I have so many things to do!" Death came a few minutes later as he was surrounded by friends who had gathered anxiously in the room.

Mrs. Seligman had been notified that her husband was seriously ill and motored immediately to Albuquerque from Santa Fé only to be apprised of his death. The funeral took place on Thursday afternoon, September 28, from the Capitol of the state, amid an imposing military display and vast throngs which crowded the highway from the Capitol to the Cemetery. The Episcopal service for the dead was read in the House of Representatives by the Rev. Walter Trowbridge of the Church of the Holy Faith at Santa Fé. At the mausoleum in Fairview Cemetery, the Masonic Blue Lodge ritual was impressively rendered.

Honorary pall bearers included scores of men of prominence, the active pall bearers being friends and associates: Dr. W. R. Lovelace, Clinton P. Anderson, Juan N. Vigil, Paul A. F. Walter, George Bloom, E. B. Swope, Martin Gardesky, John Bingham, Frank Horn, and Jesús M. Baca.

P. A. F. W.