

## Colonel Frederick H. Bierbower

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### COLONEL FREDERICK H. BIERBOWER

On the list of Maysville's honored dead is written the name of Colonel Frederick H. Bierbower, who figured prominently in notable events which shaped the history of this nation and also of the world. He was a distinguished officer of the Union army and also served with credit in the United States navy previous to the Civil war. He was a lawyer of high standing and one of the early mayors of the city. He was a cultured gentleman, who combined with the tastes of a connoisseur a life history abounding in actual achievements. His was a symmetrical development, in which the elements were happily blended in the rounding out of a nature finely matured and altogether admirable.

Colonel Bierbower was born September 12, 1833, in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. His great-grandfather, Caspar Bierbower, a native of Germany, was the founder of the family in America and one of the early settlers of York county, Pennsylvania. His son, Henry Bierbower, was a prosperous agriculturist and always lived in the Keystone state, passing away at Carlisle in 1824. He was the father of Jonathan Ayres Bierbower, who was born March 3, 1809, in York county, and when a young man of twenty-eight came to Kentucky, locating at Maysville in 1837. He was the foremost carriage manufacturer of this region and at one time maintained a plant in New Haven, Connecticut, while his repositories were situated in Louisville and Lexington, Kentucky. He achieved the full measure of success and remained at the head of the business until his death, May 31, 1858. He was married November 30, 1830, in Carlisle, to Miss Lucetta Carey, who was born August 2, 1810, in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, and passed away in Maysville, July 20, 1894.

They were the parents of Frederick H. Bierbower, who was but four years old

when the family came to Kentucky. He attended the noted Rand and Richeson private school in Maysville and when a mere lad volunteered for service in the Mexican war but was rejected on account of his age. He spent about four years in the United States navy and while in training was assigned to duty on the sloop-of-war Lexington, which joined Commodore Perry's squadron at Hongkong, China. He was appointed master's mate by President Franklin Pierce and enjoyed the distinction of being the youngest officer of the famous Perry expedition to Japan, which resulted in framing the treaty opening the harbors of the Nipponese kingdom to the commerce of the world. Colonel Bierbower had charge of a coaling station on an island of the Loo Choo group for seven months and during this trip soundings were made in the Pacific from the Arctic region to California, along the coast of western America, and a line of steamers was then put in operation.

At the conclusion of his naval service Colonel Bierbower returned to Maysville and began the study of law. He was admitted to the bar and recognition of his legal acumen led to his selection for the office of county attorney. His work in that connection increased his professional prestige and in January, 1861, he was elected mayor of Maysville. He gave to the municipality a progressive administration, productive of much good, and when his term was completed enlisted in the Union army. He recruited a company and was made major of the Fortieth Kentucky Infantry, of which he became lieutenant colonel. He was on detached service for some time, being stationed at Camp Nelson under General S. S. Fry, and was acting judge advocate general with headquarters at Lexington. He later became colonel of the Forty-first Kentucky Mounted Infantry and figured in some of the most stirring events of those times. He served until the close of the war and was mustered out with the Second Division of Kentucky at Louisville.

Colonel Bierbower resumed the work of his profession in Maysville and established a lucrative clientele, successfully handling many important cases. He acted as deputy collector of internal revenue for twenty-three years in the ninth district and afterward performed a similar service for the seventh district. He devoted much time to the study of archaeology, writing many articles on that subject, and held membership in various societies whose object is geological research. Colonel Bierbower retired from practice several years prior to his death, which occurred November 24, 1910, in Maysville, and devoted his attention chiefly to his collections and to horticulture. He was the possessor of one of the largest and most valuable collections of old and interesting books in the United States, some of them dating back to 1493, less than fifty years after the invention of printing. Among his treasures were original editions of such works as Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" and the productions of Cicero and some of the minor Greek poets. His collection of mound builders' relics was very valuable. His reputation as a bibliophile and antiquarian was not confined to Kentucky as he was nationally known to authorities on those subjects. Colonel Bierbower was a man of rare gifts, of high character and broad views, and his life was serviceable in the cause of human progress.

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