

## LAST VETERAN OF CIVIL WAR PASSES AWAY

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### Robert Millen, Melcher, Dies 8 Days Under 100 Years

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Robert A. Millen, Marion County's last surviving veteran of the Civil War, died at his home in Melcher last Saturday, Jan. 4, just a few days short of his one hundredth birthday anniversary. He would have been 100 years old Jan. 12, for he was born on that date in Gerard, Ill., 1847. He had recently expressed interest in turning the 100<sup>th</sup> milestone in his life's career.

"Uncle Bob", whose friendliness to all his neighbors, young and old, long ago earned him that title, had for some years spent most of his days in his favorite rocking chair in the big south window of his room. He liked to look out on the neighborhood, smoking his curved-stem pipe, listening to his radio, reading magazines and newspapers. Only in his latter days did he have to forego that pleasure most of the time. As he sat there his good memory and his active mind gave rise to many things in his thoughts, past and present, that he liked to talk about with the friends who dropped in when he was able to see them.

For the last 20 years or more of his life, one of his three living daughters and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. Roy Wood, had lived with him to give him the very

fine care and companionship that made his latter days comfortable and happy. Two other daughters lived in Melcher and helped in his care.

"Uncle Bob" Millen was not ill very long; his body just wore out and his life ebbed away peacefully.

#### His Father Pioneer in Marion County

Robert Millen lived nearly all of his life in Marion County on a farm near Melcher, and in the town of Melcher. He was born in Gerard, Ill., Jan. 12, 1847, but when he was nine, he came with his parents to Iowa where his father took up farming on land near what is now Melcher. As a young man on the farm he learned enough about the care of horses and cattle and their diseases to begin practice as a veterinarian after the Civil War, and he followed that work until some time before he was obliged to retire.

#### Adventure in 1863

The great experience of his life was his enlistment and service in the Civil War.

He became a soldier following a dramatic meeting of young men of the community under what is known as the old "Gosport Elm". He was one of forty or more boys who gathered under the branches of that tree in the tragic times of 1863, to hear talk about President Abraham Lincoln's call for more volunteers, and to discuss the matter. Bob Millen, then a few months more

than 16 years old, was so moved that he was one of many in the group to leave home to enlist the very next day. He joined up with an Iowa regiment – Co. A of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Infantry – and served through the remainder of the war with that organization. Then he came home to his father's farm and worked there until he took up work as a self-trained veterinarian.

### **Lincoln His Hero**

“Old Abe” was a great hero and demigod to “Uncle Bob” through all his life and near his favorite chair a fine portrait of Abraham Lincoln hung on the wall. He thought that his country still needed a Lincoln. Mr. Millen voted his first national ballot for Lincoln for president. He remained a Republican all his life. Campaigns and candidates came and went, but he said staunchly that no one had ever showed him any reason for leaving that party.

“Uncle Bob's” sight was good until in 1943. Then, when he was 96, it began to fail and he had to forego his reading. Until that year he walked up town more or less regularly, especially to drop into a barber shop for a shave or hair trim and to visit with “the boys.”

He attended the Methodist church as long as he could. That his spirit was willing even though the flesh was weak was evidenced in his insistence that on the recent Christmas day he got up and dressed and ate dinner with his daughter and her husband and a guest. On that day many friends remembered him with gifts and greetings; the patriotic organizations especially were thoughtful about that.

### **No Military Funeral**

Although “Uncle Bob” treasured his war experience, he always asked that his funeral be not in anyway a military funeral. The service was conducted by the Rev. Azel Smith, Pleasantville, a distant relative of “Uncle Bob”, assisted by the Rev. John Darlington, pastor of the Melcher Methodist church, where the services were held Tuesday afternoon.

Mrs. Robert Millen preceded her husband in death nearly 20 years ago, passing away July 28, 1927. They had four daughters, the oldest of whom, Mrs. Bertie Colwell, died five years ago. The surviving daughters are three – Mrs. Lois Hunter and Mrs. Eunice McCoy, twins, both living in Melcher, and Mrs. Amy Wood, Melcher.