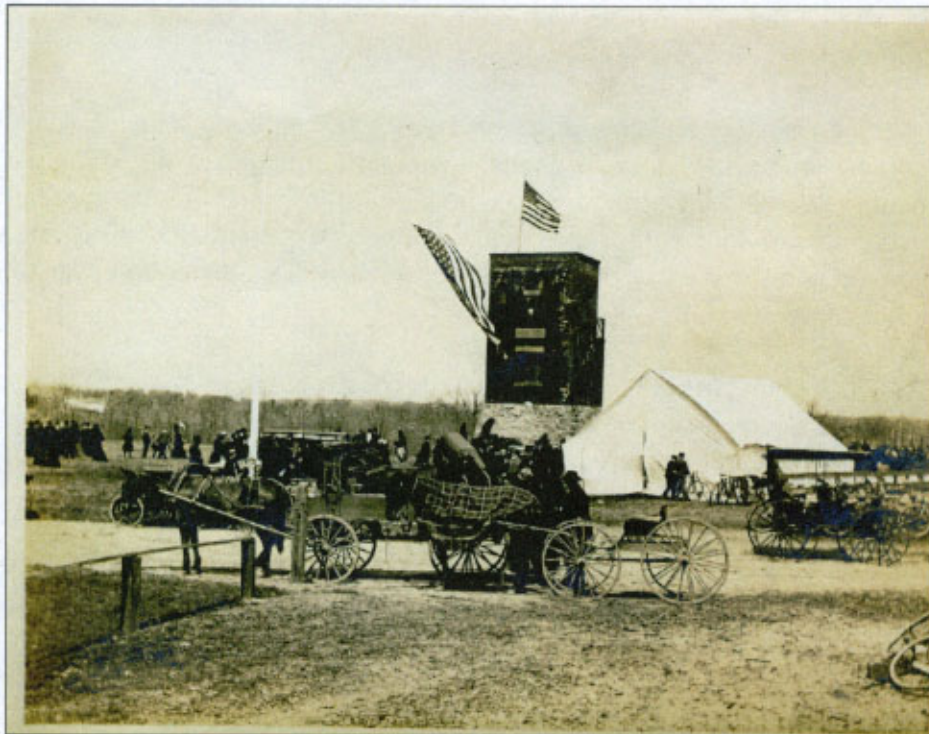


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Number 13

**Meigs Tower
A Grand Field Day
A Mighty Event**



*Grand Field Day and Shooting Contest,
Tuesday, April 21, 1903. Given by F. D. Meigs at his Tower Lot,
Hammonasset, Madison, Connecticut*

These words announced a day-long celebration of the 18 years of success for the Meigs and Company clothing store in New Haven. Mr. Meigs and his curious tower were well-known to Madison residents. A descendant of the venerable Meigs family who first settled in the Hammonasset section of Madison, Mr. Meigs had been fascinated by a stone tower he had seen on the Rhine River in Europe.

In 1895 he built a tower of his own on his ancestral farm. The tower, pictured above, rose 50 feet in the air. Its massive foundation reached 10 feet above the ground and 10 feet below. It was 10 feet square and had two rooms reached by a stairway at the rear that could be pulled up from inside.

According to an 1897 newspaper article: "The roof was finished and fitted after the manner of a roof garden and affords an excellent observation point. From the roof of the tower no finer view may be had than from any other point along the coast."

Mr. Meigs was famously proud of his tower and in 1897 he offered a prize of a fine pair of bicycle pants to the photographer who took the best picture. Madison's own Horace B. Hunter won the prize.

In 1907 Mr. Meigs erected a fence completely around his property. Painted white, it had two handsome gateways. At the same time he added a "heroic size bust of Benjamin Franklin which is attracting no end of attention." to his roof garden.

The field day and shooting contest of 1903 was a huge success. There were contests and prizes, 2 brass bands, and entertainment. It was estimated that 2000 people attended including many school children from Clinton where the schools had been closed early for the occasion. Prizes were offered for oldest person present and the wife of the most recently married young couple was to receive a silken scarf.

"The teams (of horses) hitched to every available post or tree, fence or stone wall resembled a country fair in a Western town and could be counted by the hundreds." Families were cautioned to bring their own horse blankets, but not oats as there would be plenty for all.

The crowd consumed 85 pounds of cheese, 4 and a half barrels of crackers, 5 pounds of fig cakes, 58 pounds of coffee, 58 pounds of ham and 40 pounds of roast pork.

Mr. Meigs tower stood on the north side of Cottage Road at about # 70. In those days Cottage Road was the Boston Post Road, the main route from New York to Boston. Nothing remains to remind us of Mr. Meigs' pride and joy except memories and a stone post at the corner of Mill Road and Cottage Road. Labeled "Meigs Guide" it displays the mileage to places near and far.

Directions to Meigs Tower: Take the Boston Post Road east from Madison Center passing the entrance to Hammonasset State Park. Immediately after passing the entrance, take the next left onto Mill Road, take the next right onto Cottage Road watching for Meigs Marker on the left as make the turn. The former site of Meigs Tower is on the left at # 25 Cottage Road.