

## JOHN MCKINSTRY MERRIAM

John M. Merriam, a son of Adolphus and Caroline (McKinstry) Merriam, was born at Southbridge, Massachusetts, on September 20, 1862. When he was two, his family removed to Framingham, of which he was to be so prominent a part for almost a century. He attended Framingham Academy, Phillips Exeter, and Harvard College where he was secretary and orator of the Class of 1886. After a year and a half in the Harvard Law School he was drawn off to Washington. His senior thesis in college had been "Removals from Office by Thomas Jefferson," and had interested Edward Channing, who suggested that he read it at the 1888 meeting of the American Historical Association at Washington. The paper impressed Senator George Frisbie Hoar who made Merriam his secretary and clerk of the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections, in which office he served through the 50th Congress. Most of his time was devoted to a compilation of a legislative history of the Ordinance of 1787 which under the sponsorship of Senator Hoar he read at the American Antiquarian Society in April, 1888. At the next meeting he was elected to membership.

Merriam had married Annie Chapman Davenport of Hopedale in 1888, and on the death of his father two years later he felt that he had to leave off the joys of history and politics (both of which he loved greatly) to go back to Framingham, pass the bar examinations, and establish himself in the practice of law. This he did, specializing in probate matters and maintaining offices in Framingham and Boston until the last year of his life. In 1897 he was sent to the General Court where his proposed tax reforms were so unpopular that his political career came to an abrupt end at the next election. He was consciously an Alexander-Hamilton Republican, and as such was more appreciated in

local than in State affairs. For many years he served Framingham as Town Council and Moderator, and he was sent to the non-political State Constitutional Convention of 1917. In 1917-18 he was chairman of the Framingham Draft Board. He was president and director of local banks and of a number of public service organizations. He was a founder and for many years a leading spirit of the Framingham Historical and Natural History Society, and the author of many minor historical articles, including five papers in our *Proceedings*. During the first decades of his membership the pressures of business and family responsibilities kept him from being very active, but during the crisis of the depression his financial contributions to help the Society were remarkable. In 1935 he became the senior member, and thereafter his participation in our activities was regular. Several times he entertained the members at luncheon after the Boston meeting.

Mr. Merriam had a quality of sweet friendliness unusual in a New Englander, but more normal in being quiet and unobtrusive. Although I can never remember seeing him slap a back, he loved life and people. When he had a summer home in Sherborn he enjoyed having under foot five children and a large assortment of cattle, goats, and poultry of various kinds. When I knew his home it sheltered grandchildren, and I was startled to have the three generations pull out recorders and have an impromptu household concert when the spirit moved. He enjoyed life and his regular round of activities into his ninety-seventh year, and died after a short illness on January 9, 1959.

C. K. S.

Copyright of Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society is the property of American Antiquarian Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.