

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting

OCTOBER 17, 1951

AT THE LIBRARY OF THE SOCIETY, WORCESTER

THE one hundred and thirty-ninth annual meeting of the American Antiquarian Society was held at the Library of the Society, Worcester, Massachusetts, October 17, 1951, at 10.45 a.m. In the absence of President Morison, the meeting was called to order by the Vice-president, Thomas W. Streeter.

The following members of the Society were present: John McKinstry Merriam, George Parker Winship, Victor Hugo Paltsits, Clarence Saunders Brigham, Robert Kendall Shaw, Fred Norris Robinson, Chandler Bullock, Lawrence Counselman Wroth, Waldo Gifford Leland, Daniel Waldo Lincoln, George Sumner Barton, George Francis Booth, Russell Sturgis Paine, Harry Galpin Stoddard, George Crompton, Stephen Willard Phillips, Reginald Washburn, Edward Larocque Tinker, Thomas Winthrop Streeter, William Irving Clark, Francis Henshaw Dewey, Clifford Kenyon Shipton, Alexander Hamilton Bullock, Theron Johnson Damon, Frederick Lewis Weis, Wat Tyler Cluverius, Walter Muir Whitehill, Carl Custer Cutler, Frederick Haven Pratt, Samuel Foster Damon, William Alexander Jackson, Bradley Baldwin Gilman, Ernest Caulfield, George Russell Stobbs, Arthur Adams, Joseph Carson, Edward Harold Cole, Milton Prince Higgins, Edward Chase Kirkland, Philip Howard Cook, Edmund Sears Morgan, Harris Dunscomb Colt, Jr., Lyman Henry Butterfield, Arthur Harrison Cole, and George Talbot Goodspeed.

The Secretary read the call for the meeting. It was voted to dispense with the reading of the records of the last meeting.

The report of the Council of the Society was presented by Mr. Brigham, who called attention to the fact that Mr. Merriam has now set a new record for length of membership. Mr. Merriam replied as follows:

I thank you for this cordial greeting, most significant to me as I am entering my 90th year with this unusual record of membership in this nationally known society.

My association here has surely been most pleasant, and I wonder if there is time for me to make a brief response without interrupting our program, adding something of what I might say to be a matter of record in our proceedings.

My election was, I think, without precedent; surely there has been none similar to it in these many years of my membership. My "Legislative History of the Ordinance of 1787" which I had prepared for Senator Hoar was read by him at the April meeting in 1888, before I was elected, and when I was entirely unknown to the members. But the Senator's endorsement was sufficient, and six months later I was duly elected.

My association with Senator Hoar was most happy, and will be recalled with joy as long as memory lasts. I came from a long-time Concord family, and my father was personally, but not intimately, acquainted with Judge Hoar and with the Senator. In my senior year at Harvard I studied the removals from office by President Thomas Jefferson under Professor Edward Channing in History 13, and was the first to discover the records of changes in the Journal of the Senate, a secret document for many years. I wrote a paper which he invited me to read before the American Historical Association in Washington, of which an abstract is published in their Papers, and this attracted some comment. While in Washington for this purpose I called on Senator Hoar and was pleasantly received by him as a son of a Concord friend, and later when he was looking for a new secretary he sent for my father and offered me this position.

I had then finished my first year in the Law School, and with the understanding that I might continue through the first term of the second year, I accepted this offer, and went to Washington as his secretary at

the beginning of the 50th Congress in December 1887. With his approval in February I returned to be married and then went with my bride to live at 919 I Street in the Patterson home where he and Mrs. Hoar had boarded. He was then already working on the oration which he delivered at Marietta, Ohio, the following April at the Centennial of the Northwest Settlement, of which the Ordinance of 1787 was the foundation. This was the subject he asked me to study, and I was able after the routine at the Senate office in the morning hours, to give the afternoons to reviewing the Archives in the library of the Secretary of State, having free access to them in his name, making copies and notes, and then in the evenings, with the help of my bride, typewriting a summary in chronological order of the development of this important state paper.

When I presented my report to the Senator he remarked with surprise, "Why, you have much here that is not in print," and showed it to George Tichnor Curtis, then working in Washington on a new edition of his *History of the Constitution*. He also was pleased, and asked for permission to quote a portion in the appendix referring to it as "an elaborate paper." And then the Senator brought it to our April meeting, offered it for printing in our *Proceedings*, and presented my name six months later for election as a member.

I have many pleasant incidents to recall of our association with Senator and Mrs. Hoar during the sessions of Congress in Washington, and the intermediate periods here in Worcester, before I was admitted to the Bar in Boston. The Patterson home was most congenial and is very happily referred to in the chapter in his autobiography entitled "The Fish-Ball Letter." Here are extracts from the story, as told by him:

In August 1890, the *Pittsburgh Post*, a Democratic paper, made a savage attack on me. He attributed to me some very foolish remark and declared that I lived on terrapin and champagne; that I had been an inveterate office-seeker all my life; and that I had never done a stroke of useful work.

In his reply he refers to his overwork as a lawyer in Worcester, his refusal of nomination for mayor, and of a seat on the Supreme Bench, and then a trip to Europe for his health, and arrangements for his nomination to Congress in his absence, from which he could not well escape when he got home. He adds,

The result is I have been here twenty years as Representative and Senator, the whole time getting a little poorer year by year.—During all this time I have never been able to hire a house in Washington. My wife

and I have experienced the varying fortune of Washington boarding houses, sometimes very comfortable, and a good deal of the time living in a fashion to which no mechanic earning two dollars a day would subject his household. Your "terrapin" is all in my eye, very little in my mouth. The chief carnal luxury of my life is in breakfasting every Sunday morning with an orthodox friend, a lady who has a rare gift for making fish-balls and coffee. You unfortunate and benighted Pennsylvanians can never know the exquisite flavor of the codfish, salted, made into balls and eaten on a Sunday morning by a person whose theology is sound, and who believes in all the five points of Calvinism.

Another incident which I recall in connection with the Sunday breakfasts in the Patterson front basement dining room, was watching him pass the doorway with book in hand, returning later and giving as an excuse his absorption in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

Upon the inauguration day of President Harrison, March 4, 1889, I recall the assistance I was able to give to Edward Everett Hale, the chaplain of the Senate selected as such on recommendation of the Senator. He had opened the session with prayer and then followed a brief session in the Senate Chamber, and then the assembly moved to the Rotunda steps, the historic place of presidential inaugurals. I was present on the floor, somewhat as a page, and led the chaplain to the upper gallery and along an upper floor and down a little used flight of stairs to the Rotunda, thereby avoiding the packed lower passageway. And on this occasion it was the pleasure of my wife to share the conveyance to and from the Capitol with Mrs. Hoar, Mrs. Patterson, and Dr. Hale.

I recall most pleasantly my coming into his library here in Worcester as I reported for his dictation; greeted by the beautiful Latin mottoes on the wall translated by him in this summary:

"Rest I at home, what need I more?
Here comfort is, and Mrs. Hoar."

And I recall the rides we had around the city, compared by him with Rome as a "city of the seven hills;" and to the nearby Redemption Rock which he had purchased as a memorial for his ancestor Captain John Hoar, who had ransomed Mrs. Rowlandson by personal conference with the Indian captors at this conspicuous landmark in 1675; and to the hilltop, also owned by him, on which an eagle had built a nest, the subject of a letter in Worcester papers to hunters to spare this welcome visitor honored as a national emblem.

I have kept as a cherished memento the photostatic copy he gave me of the Nathan Dane handwritten amendment to the Ordinance of 1787

excluding slavery which became the Sixth Article, and reproduced it as a frontispiece of a revision of my study which I circulated as an 80th birthday greeting.

I surely am most fortunate in these happy recollections and in my vigorous old age.

One of the sources of comfort as I recall the past, particularly if I am awake at night, is the beautiful hymn or prayer written by my father Adolphus Merriam, born in Concord August 23, 1820, died in Framingham, November 22, 1888. I found it among old family papers, and have preserved it under glass for now over fifty years. I believe it is his original composition having found no source of quotation. He loved poetry. Among his favorite books were the Poems of Robert Burns, and the writings of Theodore Parker, his district school teacher in Concord, and there were pictures of each on the mantel of our sitting room. The influence of each is reflected in this poem.

God of Creation now draw near
The weakest of thy children here,
One smile of recognition now
As we before thy presence bow.

O God in view of mercies past
Why should we with impatient haste
Distrust the future of thy care
When Father thou art everywhere.

Thou who hast marked the sparrow's fall
Will never slight thy children's call.
Then O my anxious soul be still
Accept in faith a Fathers will.

The report of the Treasurer was given by Mr. Bullock, and the report of the Librarian was read by Mr. Shipton. It was voted to accept the three reports and refer them to the Committee on Publications.

The election of officers being in order, Mr. Stobbs reported for the committee consisting of Messrs. Stobbs, Shaw, and Gilman, appointed by the Council in April 1951, the following nominations:

President

Samuel Eliot Morison, of Boston, Mass.

Vice-presidents

Thomas Winthrop Streeter, of Morristown, N. J.

George Sumner Barton, of Worcester, Mass.

Councillors

George Parker Winship, of Charles River, Mass.

George Hubbard Blakeslee, of Worcester, Mass.

Paul Beagary Morgan, of Worcester, Mass.

James Melville Hunnewell, of Boston, Mass.

Russell Sturgis Paine, of Worcester, Mass.

Albert White Rice, of Worcester, Mass.

Donald McKay Frost, of Boston, Mass.

Stephen Willard Phillips, of Salem, Mass.

Richard Allen Heald, of Worcester, Mass.

Carleton Rubira Richmond, of Boston, Mass.

Secretary for Foreign and Domestic Correspondence

Clarence Saunders Brigham, of Worcester, Mass.

Recording Secretary

Daniel Waldo Lincoln, of Worcester, Mass.

Treasurer

Chandler Bullock, of Worcester, Mass.

Committee on Publications

Clifford Kenyon Shipton, of Shirley, Mass.

Robert Kendall Shaw, of Worcester, Mass.

Frederick Lewis Weis, of Lancaster, Mass.

Auditors

Daniel Waldo Lincoln, of Worcester, Mass.

Reginald Washburn, of Worcester, Mass.

It was unanimously voted that the Secretary be requested to cast a ballot for the nominees, which being done and no

other ballot being offered, the foregoing nominees were declared elected.

The Vice-president, in behalf of the Council, proposed for membership in the Society:

Mark Bortman, Boston, Mass.

Edgar E. Hume, Washington, D. C.

Henry P. Kendall, Boston, Mass.

Stephen T. Riley, Boston, Mass.

Rollo G. Silver, Boston, Mass.

Mr. Streeter appointed a committee consisting of Messrs. Arthur H. Cole, Butterfield, and Colt to distribute, collect, and count the ballots. Mr. Cole reported that the necessary number of votes had been cast for the persons nominated and they were declared elected.

Papers were read by Mr. Edward L. Tinker on "Two-Gun Journalism in New Orleans," and by Mr. Waldo G. Leland on "Recollections of an Itinerant Historian."

Mr. Brigham described two exhibitions in the upper gallery, one devoted to recent accessions of the year, and the other showing interesting examples of colonial currency.

An article on the Society's collection of American watch papers by the Assistant Librarian, Mrs. Spear, was communicated by title.

Mr. Streeter announced that the annual luncheon for members of the Society would be given at the residence of the late Aldus C. Higgins, John Wing Road, by Mrs. Aldus C. Higgins, and Mr. and Mrs. Milton P. Higgins.

The meeting then adjourned.

DANIEL W. LINCOLN,
Recording Secretary

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