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 Obituary Sketch of Dexter R. Wright.
 

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## OBITUARY SKETCH OF DEXTER R. WRIGHT.\*

DEXTER RUSSELL WRIGHT, who died in New Haven, July 23d, 1886, was a member of the New Haven County Bar for nearly forty years. He was born at Windsor, Vt., June 27th, 1821. The days of his childhood were passed in and near St. Lawrence County, N. Y., where his father was engaged in the milling and lumber business.

Mr. Wright was prepared for college and entered the Wesleyan University at Middletown, where he graduated in the year 1845. After teaching school, as principal of the Meriden academy, for a short time after his graduation from college, he entered the Yale law school at New Haven, from which he graduated in 1848. While a member of the law school, he was a clerk in the office of E. K. Foster, Esq., of New Haven. He was admitted to the bar in the fall of 1848, and opened an office at Meriden, where he continued to practice until 1862, with the exception of a brief period of business and legal experience with the pioneers of California in 1850 and 1851.

In November, 1863, Mr. Wright opened a law office in New Haven, and continued in the active practice of his profession in that city from that time until his decease. While in Meriden Mr. Wright had much experience as the counsellor of many of the leading business men and corporations of that growing town, and his early practice there made him a thoroughly well-equipped business man's lawyer. He came to New Haven with a good reputation which he had earned by hard work in Meriden, and a large and lucrative practice soon came into his hands from many prominent business firms of New Haven and vicinity.

Mr. Wright, during his long and busy career as a lawyer, was one of the hardest workers in the profession. Devoted to the interests of his clients he neglected no opportunity to protect them. His mind was naturally logical, and his tenacious memory enabled him to hold at command the leading principles of the common law and the decisions of the courts. He rarely counselled litigation if the rights of his clients could be fairly protected by an honorable settlement. In his early life he had been an extensive reader of the best English literature, and his command of the English language was remarkable. His briefs for the Supreme Court were prepared with great neatness, skill, and ability. His urbanity to his fellow members of the legal profession and his courtesy to the court and jury were marked. His commanding form and fine carriage, added to his learning and eloquence, gave him much influence in all his forensic arguments, with both court and jury.

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\*Prepared at the request of the Reporter, by Lynde Harrison, Esq., of the New Haven Bar.

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Mr. Wright began life as a democrat, and was a warm adherent of the principles of that party as they were declared in the period prior to 1861. In 1849 he was elected to the state senate from the sixth senatorial district, being supported by both the democrats and free-soilers, who in that election united upon many of the congressional and legislative candidates for office. During the next few years he was frequently considered as a coming candidate of the democratic party for congress from the second congressional district. In the election of 1860 Mr. Wright agreed with those democrats who, under the lead of the Hartford Times, supported the nomination of Senator Breckenridge of Kentucky for the presidency, but when in the following winter the secession of the southern states began, he, and his long-time intimate friend in business and politics, Charles Parker of Meriden, discussed the grave situation of public affairs, and their loyalty and devotion to the cause of the Union were such that when Fort Sumter was fired upon in April, 1861, both of them became attached to the cause of the war for the Union. Mr. Wright made several speeches in support of the government, and with Mr. Parker, James T. Pratt, Roger Averill, and other democrats, made earnest efforts to bring the democratic party of the state firmly and decidedly to the support of the administration at Washington in its efforts to preserve the Union. In this effort they were partially successful for a time, and in May, 1862, Mr. Wright was commissioned as lieutenant colonel of the 14th regiment then being organized at Hartford. In August, 1862, he received a commission as colonel of the 15th or New Haven county regiment of Connecticut volunteers. Col. Wright took this regiment to Washington, and with great zeal, and by hard study, soon made it one of the most promising of the new regiments stationed in or about that city in the fall of 1862. Four other regiments were brigaded with the 15th, and Col. Wright, as senior colonel, had command of the brigade thus provisionally formed. Gen. Casey, then in command of the defenses of Washington, admired Col. Wright's ability, which displayed itself in constant thoughtfulness and care for the men of his command, and also by hard study of text books and military tactics both in theory and in practice. His headquarters tent was constantly a place for study, and the military instruction of field and line officers. Gen. Casey promised Mr. Wright all his influence for the early bestowal of a commission as brigadier general, and had the latter possessed the political influence of many men who were his inferiors in other respects, he would doubtless have received the star then so much coveted by every colonel in the service. Mr. Wright, however, was then known only as a union democrat and he had no political influence with the leading men of the republican party either in Connecticut or Washington.

Early in December, 1862, Col. Wright was directed to take his brig-

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ade to Fredericksburg. Although he had been recently injured by being overturned in an ambulance while riding near the railroad which ran from Washington to Alexandria, he led his brigade promptly to Falmouth, and there reported for further duty. To the surprise of the 15th regiment and its colonel, the brigade which Gen. Casey had formed was broken up, and Col. Wright found his regiment attached to one of the older, but numerically weaker brigades, with but little prospect of receiving a commission as brigadier general. He was under the command of men younger than himself, and with less ability, except that they had had a few more months of military experience. After a few months Col. Wright found himself still suffering from the injury he had received near Alexandria, and also from sickness contracted by exposure in Burnside's futile movements near Fredericksburg, and in March, 1863, he resigned his commission by the advice of his surgeon, and returned to Meriden. Here he threw himself into the cause of the union republican party as an orator in the campaign then in progress between the democrats, with Thomas H. Seymour as their candidate upon a peace platform, and William A. Buckingham as the candidate of the republican party. Mr. Wright was nominated by the republicans of Meriden as their candidate for representative, and was elected by a handsome majority. During the sessions of May and November, 1863, he acted as chairman of the committee on military affairs, which, during the civil war, was considered, with the exception of the judiciary committee, the most important in the Assembly. Mr. Wright, through the whole of that session and the extra sessions of November, 1863, and January, 1864, was one of the acknowledged leaders in a house which contained such men as Chauncey F. Cleveland, John T. Adams, John S. Rice, David Gallup, Alfred Coit, William W. Eaton, James Gallagher, Harris B. Munson, and others. A long debate, continuing for many days, was conducted by these gentlemen over resolutions denouncing the arrest of Clement L. Vallandigham of Ohio, and eloquent speeches were made concerning the powers of the federal government in the prosecution of the war, and it was conceded that that made by Mr. Wright was the most logical and eloquent of all. Mr. Wright reported the bills at the extra sessions of the Assembly for the organization of colored regiments from Connecticut, and the 29th and 30th regiments were organized under the provisions of the bill reported by him.

In the summer of 1863 Mr. Wright was made a commissioner of the enrollment board for the second congressional district, acting with the late Dr. Park as surgeon, and Captain Richard M. Clark as provost marshal. He filled this office with general acceptance to the government and the public until the termination of the war. From this time Mr. Wright allied himself with the republican party and became one of its recognized leaders in the state.

As a presiding officer he had no superiors and few equals; he was

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 Obituary Sketch of Dwight Marcy.
 

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president of the convention of 1866 which nominated Joseph R. Hawley for governor. He was devoted to public affairs as a citizen of New Haven, and for several years was a member of the board of common council and of the board of aldermen. In 1872 and 1873 he was corporation counsel of the city of New Haven; from 1865 to 1869 he was assistant U. S. district attorney for Connecticut; in 1878 he was elected as representative from the town of New Haven to the General Assembly, and at the session of January 1879 was elected speaker of the House of Representatives, which position he filled with signal ability and with great popularity. In 1880 and 1884 he heartily supported the nominations of James A. Garfield and James G. Blaine for the presidency. During all these years, while he was interested in public and political affairs, Mr. Wright never neglected his duty to his clients nor his earnest work in his profession.

As a citizen of Meriden in his early life, and of New Haven in later years, Col. Wright was always deeply interested in the improvement, growth and prosperity of those cities; he served upon several public boards connected with the local government, and was frequently a commissioner having charge of the erection of public buildings.

He was married, February 3rd, 1848, to Miss Maria H. Phelps, daughter of Col. E. L. Phelps of East Windsor, Conn., and had six children, four of whom survive him. His youngest son, Arthur B., who was admitted to the New Haven county bar in 1884, practiced his profession in the same office with his father until the death of the latter

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 OBITUARY SKETCH OF DWIGHT MARCY.

DWIGHT MARCY was born in the town of Union, Tolland county, June 8th, 1840, prepared for college at the Lawrence Academy, Groton, Mass., and graduated from Yale College in 1863. After graduation he taught school for a time, studied law and was admitted to the bar in Tolland county in 1865. He began practice at Central Village, in Windham county; afterwards removed to Tolland in Tolland county, and thence to Rockville, in the same county, where he remained in the practice of his profession to the time of his death, which occurred May 7th, 1887. In 1867 he was appointed state's attorney for Tolland county and held the office for two years. He was elected assistant clerk of the House of Representatives in 1867, a year later clerk of the House, and the year following clerk of the Senate. He represented the town of Vernon in the General Assembly in the years 1878, 1879 and 1880, and

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\* Prepared at the request of the Reporter, by B. H. Bill, Esq., of the Tolland County Bar.