

HON. JOHN TURNER WAIT, NORWICH: Advocate, Jurist, Politician, Statesman.

The subject of this sketch presents so marked a character in contemporary state biography, that the author of these papers is reluctant to attempt to give, in the brief space to which he is confined, so condensed a history as these limits require. A full half century in the state's service, with active intellect, earnest purpose, and constant application, has accomplished what can be scarcely more than hinted at in this brief résumé. We must be content, therefore, to refer chronologically to some of the important events in the life of this distinguished son of Connecticut, and leave their more elaborate record to the future historian of the commonwealth.



J. T. WAIT.

John Turner Wait was born at New London, Conn., August 27, 1811. He received a mercantile training in early life, and, leaving that, passed a year at Bacon Academy, Colchester, and two years at Washington, now Trinity College, Hartford, pursuing such studies as would benefit him in the profession he proposed to enter. He studied law with Hon. L. F. S. Foster and Hon. Jabez W. Huntington, was admitted to the bar in 1836, and commenced to practice at Norwich, where he has since remained. He was states' attorney for the county of New London in 1842-44 and 1846-54, and has been president of the Bar Association of that county from its organization in 1874 to the present time. He was candidate on the democratic ticket for lieutenant-governor in 1854, 1855, 1856, and 1857, and with his associates on the ticket failed of an election. He was the first elector-at-large as a war democrat in 1864, on the Lincoln and Johnson ticket, the republican state convention nominating him for that position by acclamation. He was a member of the state senate in 1865 and 1866, being chairman of the committee on the judiciary both sessions, also serving the last year as president *pro tempore*. He was a member of the state house of representatives in 1867, 1871, and 1873, serving as speaker the first year, his party nominating him for the place by acclamation, and subsequently declining that position, but acting as chairman of the committee on the judiciary on the part of the house, and serving on other house committees. He was candidate for lieutenant-governor on the republican ticket in 1874, but with his associates on the ticket failed of an election. He received the degree of A.M. from Trinity College in 1851 and

from Yale in 1871, and the degree of LL.D. from Howard University in 1883, and from Trinity College in 1886. In 1876 he was elected to the forty-fourth congress (to fill the vacancy caused by the death of the Hon. H. H. Starkweather), and re-elected to the forty-fifth, forty-sixth, forty-seventh, forty-eighth, and forty-ninth congresses. Subsequently he declined a further renomination. While a member of congress Mr. Wait served on the committee on commerce, on elections, on foreign affairs, and on several subordinate committees; and was also one of the three members of the house associated with three members of the senate, as a joint commission to consider the existing organizations of the signal service, geological survey, coast and geodetic survey, and the hydrographic office of the navy department, with a view to secure greater efficiency in those bureaus.

It may also be stated here, that while a member of the house of representatives in 1883 the compliment was bestowed upon him of an appointment as chairman of the select committee of the house to attend the unveiling of the statue of Professor Joseph Henry at Washington, his associates on that committee being among the most distinguished and prominent members of the congressional body thus represented.

As a member of congress Mr. Wait cared for the interests of his constituents with untiring vigilance and zeal. The extensive industries which give employment to thousand of citizens in the two eastern counties of the state had in him an intelligent and watchful guardian. As the advocate and friend of home industries he steadily opposed in Congress every attempt to impair or weaken the laws under which Connecticut manufacturing and mechanical interests have sprung up and prospered, and gave his support to every measure calculated to advance the commercial and agricultural prospects of the State.

During his ten years of service at Washington he was invariably attentive to the demands made upon his time and consideration by his constituents in matters affecting their private interests. Courteous and frank toward all who approached him, he allied men to him by the strongest personal ties, and became universally popular as a consistent representative and champion of his district and state.

The speeches as well as deeds which marked the congressional career of Mr. Wait, were admirable and effective. Among those best remembered, perhaps, have been his very elaborate and able tariff speech delivered in April, 1884, his speech on the Chinese indemnity fund in 1885, and his earlier effort in 1882, when the South Carolina contested election case of Smalls *vs.* Tillman was under consideration in the house; also, earlier than either of the preceding, his speech in the election case from

Colorado of Patterson and Belford, delivered December 12, 1877; and that in a similar case from California, of Wigginton and Pacheco, July 6, 1878 — three clear and forcible presentations of evidence; and his effectual effort in 1880 for an appropriation for the New London Navy Yard, finally carrying a bill through giving \$20,000 for a building. His address of welcome delivered at Roseland Park in Woodstock on July 4, 1879, has been characterized as "a gem of oratorical expression and patriotic sentiment;" and his published eulogy of the late Hon. LaFayette S. Foster, delivered September 28, 1880, before the superior court at New London on presenting the resolutions adopted by the bar of New London county, bears testimony to the versatility of his genius, and the depth and sincerity of his friendships.

Before entering upon legislative and congressional duties, in the interim between sessions, and since retiring from public service, Mr. Wait's law practice has been extensive and profitable, his commanding influence at the bar insuring him all the business that could possibly be attended to. For forty years he was engaged in nearly all the important cases, civil and criminal, that have come before the New London county courts. His practice has included scores of important cases, not only in his own county and the state, but before the United States courts, all of which he conducted in a masterly manner, and was generally able to bring to a successful and satisfactory termination for his clients. He is still in active practice, in his eightieth year, at his office every day, enjoying good health, with faculties practically unimpaired. During the past year Mr. Wait has made several public addresses, all of which were spoken of in very complimentary terms by the press of Norwich. It is believed that there is, at the time of writing this sketch, not another lawyer in this state still in practice who was contemporary with him in admission to the bar.

It should be mentioned that Mr. Wait is one of the incorporators of the "W. W. Backus Hospital" of Norwich, incorporated under the general laws of this state, and organized April 8, 1891, to make available the munificent gift of W. W. Backus and W. A. Slater for the charitable purpose indicated. He is also president of "The Eliza Huntington Memorial Home" for aged and infirm ladies in Norwich, a most worthy institution which was created by the benefactions of the late Jedediah Huntington and wife — the latter having been a sister of Mr. Wait. By his will, of which Mr. Wait was one of the executors, Mr. Huntington provided buildings and grounds for the Home, and \$35,000 cash to insure the proper maintenance of the charity. Mr. Wait is and has been connected, officially and otherwise, with many financial in-

stitutions and trusts in New London county, to refer in detail to which would require more space than can be given here. Among these may be mentioned his connection, as trustee, with the Norwich Savings Society, as vice-president with the Chelsea Savings Bank, and his directorship of the Uncas National Bank of that city.

From his youth up Mr. Wait has been a liberal contributor to the public press. He was a writer for Greeley's *New Yorker* in 1839, and when in 1840 C. W. Everest (not then Rev.) prepared a beautiful gift volume and engaged John Williams (not then Bishop), Mrs. Sigourney, Wm. Jas. Hamersley, Park Benjamin, James Dixon, Willis Gaylord Clark, Robert Turnbull, Melzar Gardner, and others of the brightest writers of the day to contribute to it, Mr. Wait's contribution was one of the best of the collection. And now, when a special historical event is to be written up or an obituary notice of some prominent citizen furnished, his ready pen is the first one thought of to be called into service.

Mr. Wait is connected by blood with many of the oldest and leading families in eastern Connecticut. On his father's side he is associated with the Griswolds and Marvins of Lyme, while on his mother's side he is a lineal descendant of William Hyde and Thomas Tracy, two of the thirty-five colonists who settled at Norwich in 1659. His family has given many prominent members to the legal profession. His father was long one of the leading lawyers at the bar of New London county, and for several years a judge of the old county court. He was a presidential elector in 1793, and cast his vote for Washington. He represented the town of New London for nineteen sessions in the general assembly of Connecticut. Before the war of the rebellion Mr. Wait was a democrat. The outbreak of the war, however, found him a strong union man, and from that time his political sympathies and efforts have been with and for the republican party. His son, lieutenant Marvin Wait, of the Eighth Connecticut Regiment, served with distinguished courage on the field, and in the gallant charge of that command at Antietam he fell mortally wounded. Enlisting as a private soldier when but eighteen, the story of his heroic fortitude amid the battle will be preserved upon Connecticut's historic page along with that of Nathan Hale, the youthful martyr spy. Though severely wounded in his right arm Lieutenant Wait refused to go to the rear, and seizing his sword with his left hand, encouraged his men to press on, until he fell, riddled by bullets.

In the history of the part Connecticut took in the war of the rebellion, as written by Rev. John M. Morris and W. A. Crofut, and published by Ledyard Bill, a very high compliment was paid to Mr. Wait by the formal dedication of the work to him.

This history contains about nine hundred pages, and gives a record of the splendid services of our state regiments, and the leading officers in the same, with portraits of a large number of the officers. The following is the text of the dedication:

TO
JOHN TURNER WAIT,
LATE SPEAKER
OF THE CONNECTICUT HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:
A PATRIOT
WHOSE ONLY SON FELL IN DEFENCE OF HIS COUNTRY,
AND WHOSE MANY ACTS OF KINDNESS HAVE
ENDEARED HIM TO THE SOLDIERS OF CONNECTICUT:
THIS VOLUME,
THE RECORD OF THEIR SERVICES AND SUFFERINGS,
IS CORDIALLY DEDICATED.

Mr. Wait married, in 1842, Mrs. Elizabeth Harris, who died in 1868. He has not married again. Two daughters are now living; the elder the wife of Col. H. W. R. Hoyt of Greenwich, the younger the wife of Mr. James H. Welles. Those who have known Mr. Wait most intimately in the social relations of life, bear ready testimony to his exceptional worth as a neighbor and friend. He is a gentleman of the old school, courteous, hospitable, and generous to a fault. It is the sincere hope of his fellow-citizens that he may yet survive many years to enjoy the honors which he has earned and which are cheerfully accorded to him by his contemporaries of all political parties throughout his district and the state.

CHARLES S. LANDERS, NEW BRITAIN: Cutlery Manufacturer.

Mr. Landers was born in New Britain June 8, 1846, where he has since continuously resided. He graduated from the New Britain High School in 1860, and entered Williston Seminary, Easthampton, Mass., in December, 1861, preparatory to a college course at Yale, but left in 1862 to engage in the manufacturing business. He has always taken an active interest in politics. Being the son of the Hon. George M. Landers, ex-member of Congress from the First district, he may be said to have been reared for a democrat, but he has always been an enthusiastic republican. He was a member of the republican state central committee for the campaign of 1884, but beyond this he has always declined to accept



C. S. LANDERS.

any public office whatsoever. Mr. Landers is at present manager of the extensive cutlery manufacturing business of Landers, Frary & Clark; also a director in the New Britain National Bank, the Savings Bank of New Britain, and the North & Judd Manufacturing Company. He married in 1869 the only daughter of Mr. Loren F. Judd of New Britain, and has one son, who was a member of the class of '91 at Yale.

HENRY ELMORE RUSSEGUE, M.D., HARTFORD: Physician.

The subject of this sketch was born in Franklin, Norfolk County, Mass., August 11, 1850. He passed his early years in his native town, attending the common schools and afterward Dean Academy. In 1867, he left Franklin to enter mercantile pursuits in Boston, which held his attention until Boston's "big fire," November 9, 1872, when he was thrown out of his business situation. A year subsequent to this, after occupying a position in a wholesale dry-goods house, he was prevailed upon, through the influence of zealous medical friends, to enter the profession of medicine. March 4, 1874, he matriculated at the Boston University School of Medicine, where he took a full graded course of three years' study. At the end of the three years, after a competitive examination, he was appointed to the position of resident physician and surgeon in the Massachusetts Homœopathic Hospital, receiving the diploma of the hospital in March, 1878, and afterwards the diploma of M.D. from Boston University. He married Caroline, the youngest daughter of Hon. Jos. S. Wheelwright of Bangor, Maine, and in November, 1878, settled in South Framingham, Mass. During his residence in this place, he built for himself a large practice, remaining there until 1884, when, upon the death of the celebrated Dr. Taft, he removed to Hartford, where he has since practiced his profession most successfully.

Throughout his professional career Dr. Russegue has taken a high rank, both with his fellow physicians and the public, filling many positions of trust and responsibility. He is a member of the Masonic fraternity and has, for several years, held the position of medical examiner for numerous beneficial insurance associations, among which are the Knights of Honor and the Royal Arcanum.



H. E. RUSSEGUE.