

The
THIRTEENTH GOVERNOR
of
C O N N E C T I C U T
was
R O G E R W O L C O T T

A Windsor weaver who served in the Connecticut troops in an expedition against Canada, became a major-general, and by self-education rose to the judgeship of the Supreme Court bench and to the governorship, acquiring vast knowledge without even the foundation of a common school education

R O G E R

W O L C O T T

ON the fourth of January, 1679, in Windsor, Connecticut, was born Roger Wolcott, the progenitor of a famous family. In the section of Windsor where the Wolcotts lived, onslaughts from the Indians were so frequent that it was impossible for the inhabitants to support either a minister or a schoolmaster. It is said by one writer that Roger Wolcott did not attend a common school a day in his life. As a boy he learned the weaver's trade, and at the age of twenty-one went into that business for himself. He says he was apprenticed to a "cloathier," in 1694, and went into business for himself January 2, 1699. By great industry he acquired in a moderate length of time, what was considered a competence.

In 1709 he was chosen as a representative from Windsor, and a justice of the peace the following year. Wolcott was selected as commissary of the Connecticut troops in the expedition against Canada in 1711. In 1714 he became a member of the governor's council, which position he held when chosen judge of the County Court in 1721. His ability as a judge was so generally recognized that in 1732 he was raised to the bench of the Supreme Court of the colony. In 1741 Wolcott served as deputy governor of the

colony, and chief justice of the Supreme Court. When Connecticut, in 1745, furnished one thousand men for the famous expedition against Louisburg, Wolcott was made a major general and placed in command of the Connecticut troops. During the famous siege, General Wolcott was second in command, Sir William Pepperell being the chief officer.

Wolcott succeeded Jonathan Law as governor when the latter died in November, 1750, and was continued in office for three years. His administration, on the whole, was satisfactory, but near the end of its last year an unfortunate affair occurred which injured his popularity. A Spanish vessel, while in distress, put into New London harbor for protection. While at anchor she was robbed of a portion of her valuable cargo. Complaint was made to the Crown by the Spanish ambassador at London. There was a good deal of agitation over the matter, and for a time it looked as if the Connecticut colony would be held responsible for the loss. Governor Wolcott was blamed and severely censured on account of existing conditions in that part of the colony which made such a robbery possible. Public resentment of what they called "official negligence," was widespread. The episode cost Governor Wolcott a re-election, and he "was dismissed by great majority of voices."

From his retirement in 1754, Governor Wolcott did not again enter public life, but lived quietly at his old home in Windsor. He devoted the remainder of his life to religious meditation and liter-

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ary pursuits. Although he had no education whatever, Governor Wolcott, by hard and extensive reading, fitted himself for his career in life. To literature he devoted much time, and a small volume entitled, "Poetical Meditations," was written by him and published at New London in 1725. It was a collection of six short poems, and a long narrative poem entitled, "A Brief Account of the Agency of Hon. John Winthrop in the Court of King Charles the Second, Anno Domini, 1662, when he obtained a Charter for the Colony of Connecticut." This poem has been printed in the Massachusetts Historical Society collection. A letter written to the Rev. Peter Hobart in 1761, entitled, "The New England Congregational Churches, etc.," is reprinted in Everest's "Poets of Connecticut."

Governor Wolcott died on May 17, 1767, at Windsor, in the eighty-ninth year of his age. On his tomb is the following inscription :

"Earth's highest station ends in 'Here he lies,'
And 'dust to dust' concludes her noblest song."

Governor Wolcott's son, Oliver, was afterward governor of the state ; and another one, Erastus, was a judge of the Supreme Court.