

From the Wadsworth Family in America, Lawrence, Mass., 1883.

V.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES.

Address of Hon. Llewellyn A. Wadsworth, of Hiram, Me., delivered at Duxbury, Mass., Sept. 13, 1882, at the Wadsworth Reunion, held in Commemoration of the 250th Anniversary of the Landing of the Wadsworth Family in America.

Mr. President—Ladies and Gentlemen:

As the religious devotee making his pilgrimage to a distant clime—to the Palestine or the Mecca of his faith—turns toward the cross or the crescent at the sunset hour to offer his devotions, so, to-day, all over broad America, wherever a Wadsworth dwells, his heart, stirred and thrilled with the glorious memories of the past, turns instinctively, reverently, to Duxbury.

From the Pine tree State, the Empire State, the "Land of Steady Habits," from the sunny South and from the Western Prairie, we come to the land of our forefathers, to seal our hearts anew, with the inspiration that clusters around Plymouth Rock, to consecrate ourselves anew in the land of the Pilgrims to the great ideas for which they lived and died, to listen to the recital of their toils and sufferings, and to contemplate the virtues of noble women and the valor of brave men.

Two hundred and fifty times has the bloom of Summer faded and Autumn twined its wreaths of golden leaves around Time's withered brow since our ancestors landed on this coast; and as we stand on this hallowed ground, with solemn and pathetic recollections of our sires thronging thick and fast, it is fitting that, like Ossian, the grand old poet of our fatherland, "We call back the years that have rolled away."

Most conspicuous among the members of our family who have lived in Maine was General Peleg Wadsworth. He was born in Duxbury, Mass., May 6, 1748, to Dea. Peleg and Lusanna Sampson Wadsworth, being in the fourth generation from Christopher. The line of descent is as follows: Christopher, John, John Jr., Dea. Peleg, Gen. Peleg. I regret that no history or tradition of his early life has ever reached me. He graduated at Harvard College in 1769, at the age of twenty-one. Among his classmates were Alexander Scammell, who became a distinguished officer in the Revolution, and Theophilus Parsons, who became Chief Justice of Massachusetts. After he graduated he engaged in teaching in Plymouth, Mass., where, in 1772, he married Elizabeth Bartlett, a lady of eminent piety and uncommon intellectual qualities. Their children, eleven in number, by their mother and their father's mother, trace their descent from five of the Pilgrims who landed at Plymouth Rock from the Mayflower, including elder William Brewster and Captain John Alden. He removed to Kingston, Mass., as may be inferred from the fact that his first child, Alexander Scammell Wadsworth, was born there, May 9, 1774. We soon find him among the loyal sons of Massachusetts mingling in the stirring scenes of the Revolution. On Sept. 26, 1774, a meeting of delegates from Plymouth County met at Plympton, and Peleg Wadsworth, with others, were chosen a committee of correspondence. He recruited a company of minute men, and was chosen captain. Early in 1775 the town of Kingston voted to purchase 33 stand of arms and equipments for 33 soldiers—the company commanded by Captain Peleg Wadsworth.

Immediately after the battle of Lexington the Kingston company marched in Col. Cotton's regiment to dislodge Col. Balfour's regiment of British troops at Marshfield. On reaching Marshfield a council of officers was held. Capt. Wadsworth became impatient at the delay and marched his company to the vicinity of the enemy, but Col. Balfour and his troops retreated, and embarking on several vessels sailed for Boston.

I have read that Peleg Wadsworth served as a colonel in the battle of Long Island, but whether in command of a regiment or as a staff officer I

cannot ascertain. He was in Col. Cotton's regiment, that formed a part of the detachment that was ordered to throw up intrenchments on Dorchester Heights. On Aug. 28, 1775, while his wife was with him, their first-born died, and was buried within the intrenchments. In March, 1776, he was appointed Aid to Gen. Ward when the Heights were occupied. It was the formidable character of the troops and the defences on Dorchester Heights that caused the hasty retreat of Gen. Howe and the British troops from Boston. In 1776 Col. Wadsworth was an engineer under Gen. Thomas, and assisted in laying out the defences of Roxbury. In 1778 he was appointed Adjutant General of Massachusetts.

In 1779 the British sent a fleet to occupy Bagaduce, (now called Castine,) at the mouth of the Penobscot River in Maine. The Massachusetts Board of War in return sent a fleet under Com. Saltonstall, of Connecticut, and a land force under Gen. Solomon Lovell, the Brig. Gen. of Suffolk Co., and Gen. Peleg Wadsworth was second in command. The attack upon the British forces works by the land forces is noted in history as one of the most brilliant and heroic engagements during the war. In 1780 Gen. Wadsworth, with a force of six hundred men, was placed in command of the whole coast of Maine, to protect it from British and Tories. He was authorized to execute martial law, and his firmness and intrepid bearing soon overawed the Tories of that region. Maine was peculiarly exposed, from its extensive frontier and its long line of sea coast, and Gen. Wadsworth's responsibilities were very great and his duties arduous; but his courage and patriotism never faltered, his fortitude was wonderful, and his duties were performed with that careful accuracy of method and system that permeated every act of his long and distinguished career, and the British could gain no permanent advantage during his occupancy. After the term of service of his troops expired he was left with only a guard of six soldiers at his head-quarters at Thomaston, Maine, his family being with him, and it being his intention to leave in a few days. The British commander at Castine heard of his exposed situation and sent a lieutenant and

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twenty-five men to capture him. At midnight on Feb. 18, 1781, he was awakened by loud and rapid reports of musketry and the crashing of glass in his windows. On the approach of the enemy the sentry had challenged them and retreated to the house. A volley of bullets were fired after him, while others were fired into the windows. The British quickly took possession of the house, except one room, which Gen. Wadsworth occupied alone.

Here, with a brace of pistols, a fusee and a blunderbuss he contended alone against his assailants, driving them away from the door and windows.

The British then attacked another door, which they broke in. This time the General's blunderbuss missed fire, but with that fearless intrepidity that ever characterized his career he fought singlehanded and alone against a score of men with his bayonet. Being in his night-clothes he was a conspicuous mark, and a bullet soon pierced his elbow, when, finding himself disabled, he surrendered. Lieut. Stockton complimented him for his heroic defense, when the General replied, that from the manner of their attack he inferred that they did not intend to capture him alive, and he intended to sell his life as dearly as possible. His wound prevented him from wearing his coat, and a blanket was thrown over him and he was hurried away to a vessel. After walking a mile in the snow and intense cold he became exhausted from over-exertion and loss of blood, and was placed upon a horse. He was taken to a vessel, carried across the bay to Bagaduce and imprisoned in Fort George. For two weeks he knew nothing of the fate of his family consisting of his wife, a son of five years, two daughters, younger, and a Miss Fenno, of Boston, a friend of Mrs. Wadsworth. He was regarded as a man of too much consequence to be exchanged, and was refused the privilege of a parole. He was allowed to write to the Governor of Massachusetts, also to Mrs. Wadsworth, and he soon learned that his family was safe. Maj. William Burton, a brave officer who served in 1780 under Gen. Wadsworth, was confined in the room with him. After two months imprisonment Gen. Wadsworth was visited by his wife and Miss Fenno; and he received a hint that he was to be taken to England, and probably tried and executed. He gave

his barber a dollar for gimlet, with which he bored holes around a large portion of the pine ceiling, filling them up with chewed bread. At midnight of June 18th, just four months after his capture, amid the darkness of a tempestuous night thunder storm, that drove the sentinels to shelter, he cut with his penknife the spaces between the gimlet holes, making an opening through which he and Maj. Burton escaped. Gen. Wadsworth let himself down the walls of the fort, twenty feet high, by means of his blanket. In the darkness he became separated from Maj. Burton. Gen. Wadsworth waded across the cove, a distance of a mile, the water reaching about to his armpits. The next morning he found Maj. Burton, and after three days of toil and suffering they reached the St. George settlement.

In 1797, President Dwight of Yale College, who had been a chaplain in the American Army, visited Portland, Me., and was the guest of General Wadsworth, from whom he stated that he received an uninterrupted succession of civilities; he also received from the General, and wrote, a minute and thrilling account of his capture, imprisonment and escape. Gen. Wadsworth at the time of its publication vouched for the accuracy of the account, which covers twenty-five printed pages. After his escape he resided several years in Massachusetts. He removed to Portland, Me., in 1784. In 1785 he built the first brick house ever erected in Portland, the bricks having been brought from Philadelphia. The house still stands on Congress St., and has since been occupied by his son-in-law, Hon. Stephen Longfellow, the father of the poet. We may well commend the good taste shown by Gen. Wadsworth in selecting Portland as his place of residence, for New England wears no fairer gem in her coronet of beauty than the Forest City, the home of Longfellow's, "Lost Youth,"--"the dear old town that is seated by the sea."

Gen. Wadsworth engaged in trade in Portland for several years. He was chosen president of a convention that met from time to time to consult on the separation of Maine from Massachusetts. In 1792 he was elected to the Senate of Massachusetts. In the same year he was elected a Member of

Congress from the District of Maine; and he discharged his duties with such ability and fidelity that he was elected seven consecutive terms: serving from 1793 till 1807. In 1798 the citizens of Portland gave him a public dinner in approbation of his official conduct. In 1790 he purchased of the State of Mass., seven thousand five hundred acres of land, now included in Hiram, Me., between the Saco and the Ossipee rivers, the price being 12 1-2 cts. per acre. He commenced to clear a farm immediately; and his success is shown by a statement in the Eastern Herald, printed in Portland, Sept. 10, 1792, as follows: "Gen. Wadsworth thinks he has raised more than 1000 bushels of corn on burnt land at a place called Great Ossipee, about thirty-six miles from Portland." In 1795 he built a house and settled his oldest son, Captain Charles Lee Wadsworth, on his tract. In 1800 he built a house for himself, the largest ever built in Hiram, which is still standing. On Jan. 1, 1807, Gen. Wadsworth removed to his rural home, and soon after (Feb. 27th) procured the incorporation of the township; and being a Free Mason, had it named Hiram, in honor of Hiram, King of Tyre, and Hiram Abiff, the first Most Excellent Grand Master. With his son, Capt. Charles L. Wadsworth, he engaged in farming and lumbering. He was a skilled surveyor, and was of great service and usefulness in the new township. He was selectman six years, treasurer twelve years, and a magistrate for many years; being often an arbiter and always a peace-maker. He was regarded as the patriarch of the settlement; and his home was the central point in the region for law, literature, refinement and hospitality. He was a liberal patron of education. Some of our aged and distinguished citizens revert with pleasure and gratitude to one of his last munificent acts, when, in the poverty of the settlement, he established a free school at the town house, and rode through the town on horse-back in his eightieth year, inviting the children to attend.

His family record and history is as follows:-

Gen. Peleg Wadsworth; born in Duxbury, Mass., May 6, 1748; died in Hiram, Me.,
Nov. 12, 1829.

Elizabeth Bartlett; born in Plymouth, Mass., Aug. 9, 1753; died in Hiram, Me.,
July 20, 1825.

Children:

- 1 Alexander Scammell; born in Kingston, Mass., May 9, 1774; died within the
Revolutionary fortifications at Dorchester, Aug. 28, 1775.
- 2 Capt. Charles Lee; born in Plymouth, Mass., Jan. 26, 1776; died in
Hiram, Me., Sept. 29, 1848.
- 3 Zilpah; born in Duxbury, Mass., Jan. 6, 1778; was married Jan. 1, 1804
to Hon. Stephen Longfellow, and was the mother of Henry Wadsworth
Longfellow, the poet. She died in Portland, March 12, 1851.
- 4 Elizabeth; born in Boston, Mass., Sept. 21, 1779, died in Portland,
Aug. 1, 1802.
- 5 John born in Plymouth, Mass., Sept. 1, 1781, graduated at Harvard
College in 1800, admitted to the Bar of Cumberland Co., Me., in 1808,
died in Hiram, Jan. 22, 1860. He was an accomplished scholar and
linguist.
- 6 Lucia; born in Plymouth, Mass., June 12, 1783, died in Portland, Oct.
17, 1864. An elaborate obituary from the pen of Hon. William Willis
closed with the following lines:

"OF no disorder, of no blast she died,
 fruit
But fell like autumn leaves that mellowed long."
- 7 Lieut. Henry; born in Falmouth, (now Portland,) June 21, 1785. A Lieut.
in the U. S. Navy at the age of nineteen. Killed before Tripoli, Sept.
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4, 1805, while aiding in running a torpedo ship into the enemy's fleet
- 8 George; born in Portland, Jan. 6, 1788, died in Philadelphia, April 8,
1816. He was said to have been one of the best penmen in the U. S.
- 9 Com. Alexander Scammell; born in Portland, May 7, 1790. He was for
years commodore in the U.S. Navy, and was said to have been one of the
finest-looking officers in the service. He died in Washington, D.C.,
April 5, 1851.
- 10 Samuel Bartlett; b. in Portland, Sept. 1, 1791; died in Eastport, Oct. 2, 174
- 11 Gen. Peleg; b. in Portland, Oct. 10, 1793, and was a Gen. in the U.S. Army.

Gen. Wadsworth, the subject of this address, and his excellent wife, had long been members of the Congregationalist Church.

The influence of such a man can never die. I am proud to believe that the reputation sustained by my native town for exalted patriotism is largely due ^{to} be attributed to the fact, that our young men had heard the inspiring story of his heroic deeds in the Revolution, from their grand-sires, around their hearth stones, and it formed their first lessons of patriotism as it fell from their mother's lips, mingled with the cradle-hymns of their childhood. One hundred of our young men—the flower and bloom and chivalry of Hiram—laid the bright May of youth and the glory of manhood upon the altar of the Union; and to-day, among the martyred sons of the Republic, forty-two of them are sleeping the heroes' last sleep beneath the sods of the battle-field where they fell, beside the gloomy prisons where they starved, or on the green hillside of the old homestead, where, weary and worn, they came home to die. In these days of crime in high places, of failure, embezzlement and defalcation, it is refreshing to contemplate the character of a man like Peleg Wadsworth, against whom, during his honored career of more than four-score years, the voice of scandal was never raised. Duty was his guiding star. His lofty character, founded on truth, justice and integrity, as upon the Rock of Ages, is still revered by his townsmen and cherished as a precious legacy by his posterity. His methods were as stainless as the snow, and his motives as pure and transparent as crystal waters.

On a high plateau in the valley of the winding and silvery Saco, whose majestic cataract makes endless melody as its bright waters roll onward to the sea, set like a gem in its circlet of hills and mountains, the old ancestral Wadsworth mansion still stands. On an eminence nearly in the shadow of "the forest primeval," sleeps the honored patriarch among his kindred, well worthy of the eulogium upon his tablet, "He was a Patriot, a Philanthropist, and a Christian."

Two sons of Gen. Wadsworth were gallant officers in the U. S. Navy,

and another served in the war of 1812. Henry, for whom his nephew, the poet Longfellow was named, was a lieutenant at the age of nineteen; and was attached to the schooner Scourge in Com. Decatur's expedition before Tripoli in 1804. As he took leave of his friends before embarking a sister remarked, "Henry, I fear we shall soon hear that you are a prisoner." "No, Lucia," he replied with determined emphasis, "you shall never hear that of me." The last entry in his journal before the attack in which he lost his life was this: "We are in daily expectation of the Commodore's arrival from Syracuse, with the gun-boats and bomb-vessels, and then, Tripoli, be on thy guard." The story of his heroic death is inscribed on a marble cenotaph erected by his father to his memory in the Eastern Cemetery in Portland. On the southwest face: "In memory of Henry Wadsworth, son of Peleg Wadsworth, Lieut. U. S. Navy, who fell before the walls of Tripoli on the eve of Sept, 4, 1804, in the twentieth year of his age, by the explosion of a fire-ship, which he and others gallantly conducted against the enemy. On the northwest face are these lines:

"My country calls, this world adieu;

I have one life: that life I give for you."

On the southeast face is an extract from a letter of Com. Preble: "Determined at once, they prefer death, and the destruction of the enemy, to ^a ~~capture~~ ^{activity} and torturing slavery." On the northwest face is an extract from a resolution of Congress: "An honor to his country, and an example to all excellent youth."

Com. Alexander Scammell Wadsworth, the ninth child of Gen. Wadsworth, was a lieutenant in the U. S. Navy, at the age of twenty-two. When the Frigate Constitution, "Old Ironsides," fought her memorable battle in Aug. 1812, in which she captured the British Frigate Guerriere, Alexander S. Wadsworth was 2d Lieut. on board the victorious ship. The 1st Lieut., Morris, was wounded severely early in the action, and Lieut. Wadsworth took his place. On his return to Portland his fellow citizens presented him an elegant sword, in commendation of his brave conduct as an officer.

He was an officer on the ship that carried our minister, Hon. Joel Barlow, to France, in 1811; and for courtesies received that gentleman presented him a sword. He rose to the rank of commodore.

Gen. Peleg Wadsworth, the eleventh child of Gen. Wadsworth, was for many years the wealthiest man and largest land-holder in Hiram; but his merits rested not upon wealth or the pride of ancestry, but upon his pure life and unswerving integrity. He was a consistent Christian from his youth, and a member of the Congregational church of Hiram from its foundation. He was a good military officer, was a magistrate for many years, and held other important offices; and all his business was pre-eminently accurate, systematic and exact, and his penmanship was as plain as a printed page. He kept a diary and record of the weather for seventy years. He was a successful farmer, an excellent surveyor of land, and in his youth was a model teacher: teaching a school in his native town in his twelfth year.

Zilpah, the eldest daughter of Gen. Wadsworth, was married to Hon. Stephen Longfellow, a distinguished lawyer of Portland. In her character of rare excellence was combined all that exalts and ennobles the heart of a Christian lady. She also possessed intellectual qualities of a ^{very} high order. One fact alone would well cause her name to be spoken with reverence in every civilized land beneath the sun: she was the mother of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

In conclusion, let us hope that the historian of the Wadsworth family will give due prominence to those who have fought or died for their native land. The Wadsworths of Hiram bore an honorable part in the war for the Union. Seth enlisted and served in the 17th Reg't Maine Vols. three years. Marshall L. and Alexander Wadsworth enlisted in the 27th Reg't Maine Vols., and were in the battalion of their regiment, consisting of three hundred and thirty officers and privates, who received the thanks of President Lincoln and Secretary Stanton, also bronze medals from Congress, for volunteering, after their term of service expired, to aid in the defence of Washington while the troops from the garrisons were sent forward to the

battle of Gettysburg. Charles Wadsworth Butterfield, whose mother was a Wadsworth, was a volunteer in the 9th Reg't Maine Vols., and died in South Carolina from a Bullet wound in his lungs. Perchance, the Goddess of Liberty, as she roams over the sunny plains from which she has so long been exiled, will pause to weep over the sacred resting place of her brave defender, which will never be bedewed by a sister's tears or consecrated by a mother's prayers.

The Pine Tree State folds not within her bosom a martyr more brave, loyal and chivalrous than John C. Wadsworth, of Hiram, an officer of the 17th Reg't U.S.A., who fell at the age of twenty-five, bravely fighting in the vanguard of Freedom, on the historic sods of Gettysburg. Were we, his townsmen, to consult our feelings, our tribute would be the sad, silent eloquence of tears. But the Tree of Liberty will grow richer and brighter from the blood by which it is nourished and the tears by which it is watered. The wild storm of the battle-field beats no more, and Peace, like an angel of mercy, spreads her bright pinions in our native land, and whispers consolation to the bereaved, that their loved ones have not died in vain. The Union is doubly dear to us, since the best blood of the fathers has been shed in its formation, and that of the sons in its defence.

Stronger even than the Constitution are the invisible chords stretching from southern battle-fields to northern homes; and sorrowing parents feel their hearts drawn tenderly toward the sunny land whose ever green bosom furnishes a sepulchre for their patriot sons. Let us pay our debt of gratitude to the heroic dead by transmitting the story of their valor to our children, and our children's children; and teach them also to be patriots, and guard well the legacy of liberty and union that they have received. Our meeting here has been pleasant, and our parting will be cheered by the hope that we shall meet again.

A land of rest is gleaming, where life's sparkling waves roll bright;
A land that knows no sorrows, and no darkling shades of night,
And the hand of Faith points upward, to the bright and golden shore;
May we meet again in heaven to be parted nevermore.