

MEMORIAL RECORD

OF THE

FATHERS OF WISCONSIN

CONTAINING

SKETCHES OF THE LIVES AND CAREERS

OF THE

MEMBERS OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTIONS

OF 1846 AND 1847-8.

WITH A

HISTORY OF EARLY SETTLEMENT IN WISCONSIN.

PREPARED BY

H. A. TENNEY AND DAVID ATWOOD.

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The life of Mr. DENNIS has been a busy one; but he shrinks from giving particulars to the public, otherwise this sketch would have been much fuller and more complete.

HON. NATHANIEL DICKINSON.

The ancestors of Mr. DICKINSON were from England, and settled in Massachusetts in the early part of the eighteenth century. His father, JOHN DICKINSON, married ELEANOR HICKS, and removed to Vermont in 1790; he was in the battle of Plattsburg, September 11, 1814. NATHANIEL DICKINSON was born at Calais, Vermont, December 20, 1810; received a common school education, and became a carpenter, joiner and builder. He was married at East Calais, January 26, 1841, to Miss PHILA FOSTER. His wife died March 13, 1873. In 1834, he settled at Barre, Caledonia county, Vermont; in 1836, went to Boston and remained about one year, when he removed to Haverhill, New Hampshire, where he remained till 1843, in which year he came to Wisconsin, and settled at Burlington, Racine county. In 1846, Mr. DICKINSON was elected a representative to the Constitutional Convention from the county of Racine, in which body he served on the committee on the boundaries and name of the state. His record in the convention was a highly creditable and honorable one. He was four years a member of the Burlington board of supervisors; two years was the chairman; and he served two years as a justice of the peace. He was connected with military companies in Massachusetts and New Hampshire; and was a captain of Co. G., 4th Wisconsin, under Gov. DEWEY. In 1854, he removed to Spring Prairie, Walworth county; in 1860, to Delavan; in 1863, to Elkhorn, where he now resides.

HON. JAMES DUANE DOTY.

To write a complete sketch of Gov. DOTY would be to write the whole history of pioneer Wisconsin, with nearly

every public event in which he bore a part or had official connection from the beginning. Probably no public man ever experienced greater vicissitudes in the ebb and flow of popular feeling, or occupied conspicuous and leading positions for so long a period. But as the plan of this work forbids much of detail, a summary must embody the most salient features of his career, leaving the proper filling up, where it properly belongs, to the historian.

Mr. DOTY was born in Salem, Washington county, New York, in 1799. After a thorough preliminary education, he adopted law as a profession, and located at Detroit, Michigan, in 1818. He was soon after made secretary of the legislative council and clerk of the court. In 1820, he was one of the party who, under Gov. CASS, made the celebrated voyage of the upper lakes in canoes, negotiated treaties with several Indian tribes, and made a report on that then almost unknown region, which will ever be read with pleasure and profit by every student of American annals.

In 1823, congress passed an act providing for the appointment of an additional judge for the territory of Michigan, and to establish courts in the counties of Michilimackinac, Brown and Crawford, the latter two embracing the whole territory comprised in the present states of Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota and Dakota. Judge DOTY was appointed to the position, and at once commenced upon the work of the new circuit. The same year he married the eldest daughter of Gen. COLLINS, of New Hartford, Oneida county, New York.

His first term of court was held at Prairie du Chien, then little else than a military outpost among savages, and his first purpose was to have made that place his home; but he finally settled at Green Bay, where he kept his residence for about twenty years. He filled the office of judge for nine years, when a successor was appointed. He then devoted a lengthy period in making examinations

of the interior country—especially in Wisconsin and northern Illinois, with all of whose great topographical features he made himself personally familiar, being in advance of either surveys or settlement.

In 1839, he was one of the commissioners appointed by act of congress to lay out a military road from Green Bay to Chicago, Illinois, and to Prairie du Chien. In 1834, he was elected to the legislative council of Michigan to represent the district west of the great lakes. While in that body he introduced a bill to make Michigan a state, which was finally adopted, and led to the division of its territorial limits two years later, and the creation of Wisconsin and Iowa territories. Embarking in the land speculations that followed, Gov. Doty, in partnership with Gov. STEVENS T. MASON, of Michigan, among other selections, entered the site of the present city of Madison, secured the location of the capital, and caused it to be surveyed and platted into lots, which was soon followed by pioneer settlement.

In 1838, he was elected delegate to congress from the newly organized territory, in which capacity he served until 1841, when he was appointed to the office of governor. His administration, owing to local causes, was a stormy one, and the records and press of the period are filled with details of bitter contention. After serving about three years, a successor was chosen, when he was appointed by the war department on a commission to treat with the Indian tribes of the northwest, with whom important treaties were soon negotiated.

In 1846, he was elected a member of the Constitutional Convention from Winnebago county, serving as chairman of the standing committee on the boundaries and name of the state, and a member of the committee on miscellaneous provisions. Owing to the bitter memories and jealousies of the period, the part he took in the general proceedings was not especially prominent, yet his minute geographical knowledge and long personal experience from actual travel

and investigation rendered his services invaluable to his associates.

In 1848, after the state organization, he was elected a member of congress from the third district, and re-elected in 1851. After an interval of some years' repose, he was appointed, in 1861, superintendent of Indian affairs, and subsequently governor of Utah territory, which position he held until his death, June 13, 1865.

An impartial estimate of the public career and services of Gov. Doty, and their connection with the present, drawn by one who took some part against him in the contentions of early times, is a work in which any who participated might well feel diffident. Still there is a common ground upon which all will agree. He was a man possessing extraordinary genius and abilities, far beyond the common lot. He was versatile, polished, and of marvelously winning address. His ambition was great, noble and honorable. His chief and greatest pride, was in the growth and development of a state and country whose institutions he had assisted in creating, and to bear a conspicuous part in maturing events that had grown largely from his own labors. To great natural graces and gifts, he added profound learning; a keen insight into the secret springs of human action; a wealth of genial courtesy and sympathetic kindness; a brilliant command of language embellished by deep thought; a fund of humor ever flowing, and an active benevolence rarely found outside of frontier life. Nor was he selfish, or avaricious of personal gain, or the poor distinction of mere wealth. His opportunities were great, but his losses and sacrifices were so much greater as to keep him in pecuniary embarrassment the greater portion of his life. Vast as was the field of his labors—immeasurable the fruits—he rarely failed to be equal to, or greater than his surroundings; and, when impulse or passion did not blind, his judgment was rarely at fault. He reached results logically and almost by intui-

tion. His mistakes were human. His merits far preponderate in the scale of any just estimate of his career.

Politically, while filling the office of executive, he had many active enemies. Personally, he may be said to have had few, or none. Naturally enthusiastic, full of confidence in the rapid development of the fertile wilderness all about him, he embarked in extensive landed speculations to be rudely awakened, like others, from dreams of wealth inspired by ardent hope, rather than conditions of realization. In this, his experience was similar to that of all who participated in the prevalent impulse. But his prominent connection with public finances, and a banking system too feeble to stand alone, made him a conspicuous target for the shafts of even well meaning men—and much more so of the disappointed. That he was derelict in any form from purpose or choice, is contrary to the evidence of every act of his life. From private embarrassment to political hostility, in such cases, is but a step, and unluckily, the contest was intensified by some acts, which, if not arbitrary, must be classed as errors of judgment. In such controversies, and in the midst of excitement, the real motives and purposes of rulers are often not only wholly ignored, but even bitterly derided. Excepting a collision with the legislature, the official labors of Mr. Doty, in every position, were usually cordially sustained and approved.

It was the fortune of the governor to have begun public life in a field where almost every important actor secured special prominence. The explorers of unknown regions are usually conspicuous, and this especially where multitudes impatiently wait the information gathered. But it is little enough to say of him, that he would have been a man of mark in any country or state, at any time. His commanding person, dignified and affable address, and greatness of ideas and purposes, insured respect under all circumstances. Men instinctively felt that he was born to be a leader—the peer of the highest—qualified and fitted for any sta-

tion that might be allotted to him. His real history remains yet to be written.

HON. JEREMIAH DRAKE.

JEREMIAH DRAKE was born in Ulster county, New York, March 28, 1784. His father, CORNELIUS DRAKE, was born in the state of New York, May 10, 1765, and mother, PEGGYE DRAKE, September 25, 1762. His education was that of the common schools of the period. His occupation generally was that of a miller and farmer. He was married September 13, 1819, to LUCINDA BROCKETT. He resided in the town of Salisbury, Herkimer county, New York, from 1800 to 1842, when he removed to Azalan, Jefferson county, Wisconsin, and the next year to Columbia county, where he resided until his death, December 6, 1868. His opponent as candidate for the convention in 1846, was JAMES T. LEWIS.

Mr. DRAKE served in the convention as one of the committee on education, schools and school funds, and throughout the proceedings of the body, made a highly honorable record as a diligent and useful member. At the close he retired to private life, and thereafter seems to have avoided all public positions, unless of a local nature.

HON. ABEL DUNNING.

ABEL DUNNING was born in Webster, Monroe county, New York, February 17, 1811. After enjoying a thorough common school education, he adopted farming as an avocation. September 10, 1838, he married HARRIET M. ROGERS, who died June 2, 1857. November 5, 1862, he married Mrs. DORA NEWHALL as his second wife.

Mr. DUNNING settled in Madison, Wisconsin, July 7, 1837, and has ever since remained on the farm he soon after selected for a homestead. He was among the first who broke the virgin soil in Dane county, and the first who put in a crop of any kind in the town of Madison; and,