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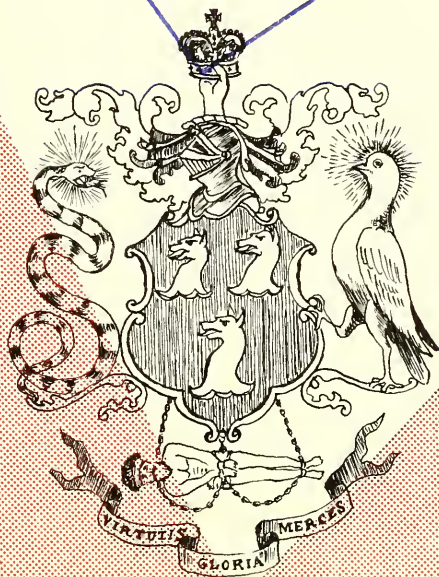
Colonel Robert S. Robertson,  
1839-1906



# Colonel Robert S. Robertson

1839-1906

- soldier
- public officer
- historian
- social arbiter









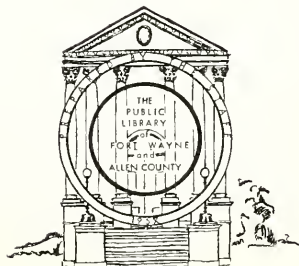
*R. S. Robertson*



*Colonel*  
*Robert S. Robertson*

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One of a historical series, this pamphlet is published under the direction of the governing Boards of the Public Library of Fort Wayne and Allen County.

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## FOREWORD

During the last half of the nineteenth century, Colonel Robert S. Robertson was an acknowledged leader in the legal, political, literary, and social circles of Fort Wayne. The following publication outlines his life and achievements.

The source materials were drawn from Fort Wayne histories, newspaper files, Robertson's Civil War letters and diary, his scrapbooks, and personal interviews with his descendants. Throughout the biography quotations have been freely excerpted and abridged from the sources.

The Boards and the Staff of the Public Library of Fort Wayne and Allen County gratefully acknowledge the kindness and co-operation of the Robertsons in loaning family papers and photographs used in the compilation of this biography. The Public Library of Fort Wayne and Allen County presents this sketch in the hope that it will prove interesting and informative to Fort Wayne citizens.



For almost forty years Colonel Robert S. Robertson was an outstanding citizen of Fort Wayne, Indiana. Before coming here he had distinguished himself as a soldier in the Civil War. In Fort Wayne he was respected as a lawyer, politician, and historian. His contributions to the culture and refinement of the Summit City were impressive.

## EARLY YEARS

Robert S. Robertson was descended from Scotch ancestors. His paternal grandfather, also called Robert Robertson, was born in October, 1755, in Kinross-shire, Scotland, on the farm of "Touchie Miln." Family genealogy indicates that the land had been handed down by primogeniture through several generations from their ancestor, Robert Robertson, of 1470. As a younger son, with limited opportunities at home, the grandfather immigrated to the United States in 1793 and settled in Washington County, New York. He made a home there in the wilderness, where he lived until his death on November 6, 1840.

Nicholas Robertson, father of the Colonel, was born in the North Argyle home on May 12, 1803. A man of marked ability, he served that village many years both as postmaster and as justice of the peace. In early life a cabinetmaker, he later owned and operated a mill. On May 27, 1831, Nicholas Robertson married Miss Martha Hume Stoddart, who was born in New York City on March 20, 1812.

She was the daughter of Robert and Anne (Hume) Stoddart. Both the Humes and the Stoddarts were prominent Scottish families. The Stoddart family name was derived from the term "standard," inasmuch as the first of the name went to England with William the Conqueror as standard bearer for the Vicompte de Pulesden. Lyon King-at-Arms of Scotland came from this family. The first Hume who came to America was a captain in the British army during the Revolution; later he married a Long Island girl and became a citizen of New York.

Robert Stoddart Robertson was born on April 16, 1839, at North Argyle, New York, to Nicholas and Martha Robertson, who

were also the parents of two daughters--Margaret and Anne. The couple belonged to the rather austere Presbyterian colony planted in that region of New York about 1764 by Captain Duncan Cameron, under the patronage of George Douglas Campbell, Duke of Argyle. Young Robert and his sisters learned the lessons of uprightness, honor, thrift, and industry that directed and influenced their lives.

## EDUCATION

Robert received his elementary education in the common schools, where his teachers marked him as more studious than most boys. Later he attended Argyle Academy, becoming an omnivorous reader of the best literature that lay within his reach. Though he enjoyed the usual sports and recreations of village boys, his father taught him cabinetmaking, which he found useful in later life. Until 1859 he worked during vacations in his father's saw-mill and gristmill. Robert liked to observe his father when he presided as justice of the peace. He early chose the law as his life profession and became a student in the office of James Gibson in Salem, New York, in 1859. Early in 1860 he went to New York City and continued his studies with Charles Crary, author of *THE LAW AND PRACTICE IN SPECIAL PROCEEDINGS . . . IN NEW YORK*. In November, 1860, he was admitted to the New York bar, having previously successfully passed a rigid examination at the hands of the older attorneys, J. W. Edmunds, E. S. Benedict, and M. S. Bidwell. Judges Josiah Sutherland, Henry Hageboom, and B. W. Bonney presided at the examination.

Robert went to Whitehall, New York, to begin active practice. John H. Boyd, a member of the lower house of Congress from that district, was retiring, and Robert purchased his practice.

## EARLY WAR EXPERIENCES

The Confederate attack on Fort Sumter on April 12-13, 1861, marked the beginning of the Civil War. After considerable

soul-searching during that spring and following summer, young Robertson reached a decision regarding his patriotic duty.

Shortly thereafter, Robert and two friends recruited a company of soldiers at Whitehall; the company was mustered into the army in November, 1861. The men elected Robertson captain, James C. Parke first lieutenant, and Frank A. Churchill second lieutenant.

On November 21, 1861, Robertson writes his parents regarding his induction:

I have thought of it so much that I have felt better since I took the oath to "true allegiance bear" etc., which converted me from a professional man into a soldier, than I have for several months. I feel that I am doing a duty that I ought to have done before, and feel more like a man than I was before, and I experienced a feeling of relief as soon as it was over which I cannot describe.

During the early winter of 1861-62 the recruits were quartered in barracks at Albany. Soon the War Department ordered the consolidation of parts of companies and regiments. His unit became a part of Company I, Ninety-third Regiment, New York Volunteer Infantry. Unfortunately, the order forced some officers to take lower positions. In a letter to his parents from Albany, dated January 16, 1862, Robertson writes:

The government is raising Cain with us today. We have got to consolidate one of our companies into the others and take in another. It will leave no vacancy in the line of offices for me. Colonel Crocker feels bad enough that he cannot fulfill the promise he made me at present. If I will take the place of orderly sergeant for a while, he will have me appointed to the first position of lieutenant that becomes vacant; he says I will not have to act as orderly more than five or six weeks. I think the opportunity too good to be lost.

The following entry appears in Robertson's private diary under January 24, 1862:

I was appointed first sergeant, or orderly, of Captain

Johnson's Company I and entered on the discharge of my duties, finding it an onerous and disagreeable position, as nearly the whole charge of a company falls on the orderly.

On April 15, 1862, Lieutenant James M. Crawford resigned his commission in the company, and Robertson was appointed a second lieutenant in his stead. His commanding officers, Colonel Crocker, Lieutenant Colonel Butler, and Major Cassidy sent strong recommendations to Governor Morgan of New York and urged that Robertson receive the commission. Governor Morgan confirmed the appointment shortly thereafter.

Lieutenant Robertson served in Virginia and Maryland in 1862 and 1863. He narrowly missed action in the engagement at Williamsburg in June, 1862. His description of the carnage and perception of the twist of fate which spared his regiment is expressed in a letter from the White House in Virginia, dated June 4, 1862, to his parents:

Since Sunday morning we have seen or thought of little else but blood, broken arms, or legs, with all the concomitants of a bloody battle. Trains of cars, loaded with wounded, have been coming here, and we have been unloading them. It is a terrible sight to see thousands of our brave young fellows crippled for life. What brings it home all the more to us is the fact that our own brigade and division was first attacked and cut to pieces before they fell back for reinforcements. Many of my acquaintances were either killed or wounded. All that saved us from the same fate was the fact that, at midnight Sunday two weeks before the battle, an order was given for us to come here the next morning. Had we remained with the brigade, our regiment must have been cut to pieces, and some of us would now be where so many of our comrades are.

#### MILITARY EXPERIENCES; OBSERVATIONS AND OPINIONS

The war, however, was not all blood, sweat, and tears for





Lieutenant Robert S. Robertson

young Robertson. His trained powers of observation, his knowledge of history and historical personages, his growing knowledge of men and events of that troubled period are reflected in his letters and particularly in his diary. Lieutenant Robertson was a voluminous correspondent; his manuscript letters to his parents alone during his army years (1861-64) fill a folio volume. The young soldier made diary entries periodically (although not daily) in spite of fatigue, hardships, and heavy duties. The diary, a large, thick book of four hundred ninety-three pages, records his detailed impressions of military life, and the war, as well as his reflections and evaluations on government, fellow-officers, and military strategy.

In May, 1862, Robertson marched with his company to the White House in Virginia. Excerpts from his diary for May 19 and May 25 follow:

We marched to White House Landing, the base of supplies, on the Pamunkey River, where we learned that we were to act as provost and depot guards for the army supplies. The White House is on the Pamunkey River Railroad and was the home of William Fitzhugh Lee, a rebel colonel and son of General Robert E. Lee. It formerly belonged to the Custis family and was the home of Martha Washington. The place was now deserted except by the overseer and about two hundred fifty slaves, who seemed delighted at the prospect of freedom. The house is neat, comfortable, and unpretending, with a veranda along the river front, shaded by a beautiful grove. A little up the river is Hillhouse, where, it is said, Washington first met his future wife at a party, while on his way to Williamsburg as a delegate to the House of Burgesses.

Today, Sunday, having nothing else to do, I visited the "White House." It was richly furnished, and many fine books were on the tables and in cases, and some valuable paintings of the Custis family were in an upper room. Ladies' apparel lay just where taken off, as if the owners had left in haste. A paper was fastened on one of the doors written in a lady's hand as follows:

"Northern soldiers, who profess to reverence Washington, forbear to desecrate the home of his first married life, the property of his wife

and now owned by his descendants.

A Granddaughter of Mrs. Washington." Underneath, someone had written:

"Lady, a Northern officer has protected your property in the face of the enemy and at the request of your overseer."

What food for reflection! The descendants of Washington trying to destroy the government he founded, while the men who are sought not to desecrate his home are fighting for the government, and out of respect, are guarding it as a hallowed spot. It is said they [George and Martha Washington] were married at St. Peter's Church, about two miles from here. The records of the church are here, but sealed, and the vigilant sentinel would not allow them to be opened.

In late June the Confederate army drove back the Union forces, which attempted to evacuate their stores and to abandon White House as a base of supplies. The unexpectedly rapid enemy advance forced the Northern army to set fire to huge quantities of materiel and ammunition. Let Robertson's diary entry of June 28, 1862, describe the scene:

We fell back to the landing below the White House, where two boats still remained to carry us. General Casey sat on the deck with a field glass, sweeping the horizon until nearly all were on board. While thus engaged, he saw that the White House, which had been so carefully guarded, was in flames; the torch was applied, he believed, by an incendiary. Even then he sent a squad to try to save it, but it was too late. Many rejoiced at its burning, and others deplored the event on account of its associations, but it was gone, and there was no use in crying over it. At last we were all on board, and as we left the wharf just before dark, the enemy's skirmish line appeared in the edge of the woods and saluted us with a few parting shots, without doing any damage. Thus we bade farewell to White House Landing--a place which is associated with many pleasant memories.

Robertson speaks his mind freely in an undated letter regarding his commanding officers:

I have no confidence whatever in our present commander [Lieutenant Colonel Butler], who is a mixture of knave and fool, and we feel thankful that he has not had an opportunity to immortalize himself by leading us to sure destruction. We are trying to get rid of Butler, but while the battle is daily impending, there is no use in trying to do much till things look a little more settled than they do now.

Among all his commanders, Lieutenant Robertson held the greatest admiration for General George B. McClellan. Commissioned general in chief of the Union armies in November, 1861, McClellan directed the Peninsula campaign (March-August, 1862) in which Robertson served.

In the following excerpts from a letter addressed to his parents from a camp near Brownsville, Maryland, dated October 17, 1862, Lieutenant Robertson records his devotion to General McClellan.

There is a strong radical party which seems determined to accomplish the overthrow of McClellan either by fair means or foul. I fairly tremble to think of the consequences which would result to us were McClellan removed and some pompous upstart placed over us. You have read of the devotion and love Napoleon's troops had for him. I am not saying too much, when I say that the same feeling exists in the Union Army for the "new Napoleon." I have been serving under him for seven months, and I have yet to hear anything but praise for him from both officers and men. On the battlefield, I have seen the army wet, footsore and weary, hungry and thirsty enough to drink from the muddy pools by the roadside, with their faces blackened by exposure to all kinds of weather. I have seen those men rise up as one man and join in cheers that fairly made the ground tremble, on the approach of their commander. You can imagine something of the feeling which animates the men when they know he is with them. They would not fight so well under any other!

Robertson's letter of November 12, 1862, continues.

General McClellan has been removed from the highest po-



. . . many officers came to pay their respects . . .

sition in the army, and time alone will tell whether the move was a wise one or not. The intense feeling exhibited among the troops on the departure of McClellan was not because the army does not admire Burnside, but because they idolized McClellan and feel a blow struck at him as their representative as keenly as if struck at themselves.

In his letter of December 14, 1862, Robertson writes:

You ask me how I like Burnside. I think a great deal of him--consider him next to McClellan, and you know how much I think of him. Those who are down on "Little Mac" know nothing of what they are talking about. I consider McClellan one of the most noble and self-sacrificing men in the world, and at the same time the most abused man in the country. Burnside is of a more jovial disposition than McClellan and will shake hands or talk with anyone, while Mac was of a modest and retiring disposition. We saw very little of him. You can see Burnside out in his shirt sleeves, most any day. The last time we moved, he showed some of our boys how to put up a tent, which puzzled them a little.

Robertson's diary, July 8, 1862, relates his impressions of a visit by the President thus:

President Lincoln arrived toward evening and reviewed the army by moonlight. It was a beautiful evening, and the review, although a novel affair, was a magnificent scene. Thousands of muskets flashed in the moonlight as the President rode along the line, and long and hearty was the shout of applause and welcome which greeted him.

Again in his diary, April 6, 1863, Robertson writes:

The President reviewed the cavalry today, and after the review many general officers came to Headquarters to pay their respects to him. I had never seen Mrs. Lincoln before. She is a pleasant but not an intelligent-looking woman. The President is an ungainly-looking man but has a fine expression, and he is everywhere welcomed by the soldiers, who respect him for his integrity

and good management of the war.

On October 17, 1862, young Robertson writes his parents from a camp near Brownsville, Maryland, and details his duties:

I will give you an idea of our duties at Headquarters. We drill five to eight hours every day. When Headquarters are moved, we furnish a detail to strike tents and put them up again in the new place; we keep guard around Headquarters all the time. I am officer of the guard today--came on last night and will be relieved tonight. I must see the guard properly posted, see that each relief goes out at the proper time, give the sentinels instructions and the countersign, visit them once every two hours to see that all is right, and have general supervision of the camp. I must not be caught sleeping during the twenty-four-hour period, or off goes my head. The punishment is "death, or such other punishment as a court martial may see fit." I must also turn out the guard to salute all generals and the commandant of the post. When I go the rounds after 9:00 p.m., the countersign is out. If anyone approaches a sentinel without the countersign, he calls for the sergeant of the guard, who brings the prisoner to me. We have to do our duties faithfully, for there are a good many old heads to watch us; they would have no mercy on a volunteer officer.

During his military service in the War Between the States, Lieutenant Robertson was granted two leaves of absence. His diary entries in January-February, 1863, record his visit to his family in North Argyle, New York.

I arrived home, after more than a year's absence, and, sitting with my friends by a comfortable fire, I could scarcely believe that little more than twenty-four hours ago, I was where I could see the smoke of rebel camp fires and the intrenchments on the Rappahannock.

I remained home, visiting and sleighriding, and on the 5th and 6th of February was initiated into the society of Freemasons in Fort Edward Lodge No. 267, and on the 7th went to New York City to visit my friends there.

Early the following year, young Robertson made a second visit home. Under the date lines January 23-24, and February 8, 1864, his diary entries describe the journey:

I made application to General Patrick for permission for my father to visit the army and left directions to have the pass sent to me. I intended to go today but did not get ready in time.

I left camp at 7:00 a.m., riding on horseback to the station, and started at 9:45 a.m. for home, after a year's absence. I reached home safely, and, after a pleasant visit, I persuaded my father to return to camp with me for a visit. We left New York City on February 7 and reached Washington February 8.

We breakfasted in Washington and took the 9:50 a.m. train for Brandy Station. An ambulance jolted us severely over the corduroy road built by the army to Stevensburg and gave my father an idea of the poor comforts of army travel on army roads. On arriving in camp, we found improvement had been made at Headquarters.

In February, 1863, Captain McConihe and Lieutenant Ball of Company K requested that the commanding officer of the regiment recommend young Robertson be commissioned first lieutenant. He assumed his duties with Company K shortly thereafter. He received his commission as first lieutenant with rank from February 21, 1863.

## THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG

The Battle of Gettysburg (July 1-3, 1863) decided the outcome of the invasion of Pennsylvania under Lee. The Union victory was due in large part to General Meade's masterly defense. Although Lieutenant Robertson did not actively participate in the engagement, he records his impressions:

On July 4 we got orders to go to Gettysburg and started in the afternoon in the midst of a drenching thunderstorm. We plodded along till we got to Taneytown about eleven o'clock in the



darkness; we were too weary and footsore from wading in the mud and stumbling over stones to go any further, so we stopped for the night. In the morning I had a cup of coffee and some hard crackers (the first in twenty-four hours), and then we started again and had another weary march in the mud to Gettysburg, thirteen miles further. We came over a portion of the late battlefield through heaps of dead men and horses, and the sight was enough to make anyone feel glad that he was not here in time for the fight. The slaughter was dreadful on both sides, and where bayonet charges were made, Union and rebel soldiers lay piled in heaps together. Large fields of grain were trampled down, and the fences are scattered in every direction. Lee is soundly whipped in his second invasion of the North, and that is some compensation. Lee's army is retreating, and our forces are following rapidly; I think we will make him fight again before he can cross the Potomac. Indeed, I think the Potomac will be so swollen with torrential rain that he will find it impossible to cross back to Virginia. General Meade deserved great credit for the rapid movement of the army and the manner in which he conducted the fight, and now he is pushing on with great rapidity to intercept Lee again.<sup>1</sup>

In December, 1863, Colonel Nelson A. Miles (later General Miles) offered Lieutenant Robertson the position of aide on his staff. Young Robertson accepted the offer. By special order from Headquarters of the Army of the Potomac, December 22, 1863, Robertson was detailed for duty on the staff of the Commanding Officer of the First Brigade, First Division, Second Army Corps. Lieutenant W. L. Bramhall succeeded Robertson as acting adjutant of the regiment.

#### THE ENGAGEMENT AT CORBIN'S CREEK

While on staff duty Lieutenant Robertson participated in the action at Corbin's Creek. Thirty-three years thereafter (July 26, 1897), R. A. Alger, Secretary of War under President McKinley, informed Robertson that the Congressional Medal of Honor

was presented him for most distinguished gallantry in action. Robertson describes the engagement in DEEDS OF VALOR as follows:

The engagement at Corbin's Creek in May, 1864, was preliminary to the Battle of Spotsylvania. By a rapid march early on May 8, the Second Army Corps gained the road. We reached Todd's Tavern when Lee's men made an attempt to cut our column in two. Our brigade was pushed through the hot pine woods to a valley through which runs Corbin's Creek. We halted for a time, and a picket line was posted to guard the approaches. Hardly had it been posted . . . before it was thought necessary to extend the line further to our right to cover a byroad there. The duty fell to us. I was riding down the road to an opening in the bushes . . . when I found the line of battle moving toward me and our position. There was no escape except through the gap. They were rapidly approaching; no time was to be lost, for if they reached the opening before me, my march would end in Richmond as a prisoner of war.

They evidently believed I was coming to surrender, for they invited me to join them in polite terms, which were, "Come in, you damned Yank! We'll take good care of you." But the opening was reached, and I showed my horse's tail and his speed as we galloped up the hill. Scattering volleys were fired, but the rebels were excited and shot wildly. My horse leaped a rail fence at the top of the hill; the saddle girth had come loose, the saddle turned, and I fell. To mount again was only the work of a moment, for the dread of a rebel prison almost gives one wings. The volleys meant for me had roused the brigade, which greeted me with hearty cheers as I rode into line with my saddle under my horse instead of under me. The attacking columns appeared but halted to make proper disposition for the attack, and we were ordered to a better position a little in the rear. Shortly afterwards another rebel brigade was discovered at our right flank. We had to prepare for an attack there and to the front. Reinforcements were sent for. The brigade in front moved up the slope. Gallant Colonel McKean of the Thirty-first Pennsylvania had charge of that part of the line and spoke words of encouragement to his men, many of whom were raw recruits and had never been under fire



" . . . the saddle turned, and I fell."

before.

The ki-yi-yi of the Confederates was not answered until they were close upon us. Then a volley answered their yells sending many to their long home, but they closed ranks and marched down the hill. Now commenced hot work on the right. Here were the Sixty-first New York and the One Hundred and Fortieth Pennsylvania under General Miles in person. The Confederates charged and nearly drove in our center, which broke and drifted to the rear. The staff tried to drive and coax the frightened men. I at once seized the colors from the frightened guard and rode with them in the face of the enemy to their former place. This checked the panic and inspired the men. The regiment rallied on its colors. The line was saved, our little brigade was proud, we had whipped two brigades of Mahon's division before any reinforcements reached us, and we were received with hearty cheers as we filled the trenches. We had lost nearly two hundred men and were obliged to leave our dead upon the field.<sup>2</sup>

## LATER WAR EXPERIENCES

While on staff duty Lieutenant Robertson was twice wounded. He suffered the first wound on May 12, 1864, during the Battle of Spotsylvania Courthouse. His diary records the episode:

I started back to the line, when I received a bullet on my right knee, which knocked my legs from under me; I fell on my face. The pain was so intense that I thought my leg was shattered, for I could not stir. Some men dragged me to a shelter under a small bank out of the range of the balls, where I found that I had been struck by a spent ball on the knee joint, which had cut to the bone and stopped. I tied my handkerchief tightly around it, and as soon as the pain subsided, limped on.

Although the wound was quite painful, it did not incapacitate Robertson, for he stayed on the battlefield until nightfall. His knee was dressed the next morning in the field hospital, and he resumed duty almost immediately.

Eighteen days after Robertson received his first wound, General Barlow ordered him to carry dispatches during a hot fight at Totopotomoy Creek, Virginia. While on this mission, he was shot from his horse in a charge.

His letter to his mother from Seminary Hospital at Georgetown, D. C., dated June 5, 1864, gives the details.

I am in for an all summer campaign at home this time, being wounded quite badly. It is not considered dangerous and will not cripple me. I was struck in a skirmish ten miles north of Richmond on the 31st of May. The Minie ball entered the right groin, went through the bone, passed round to the other side of my backbone without injuring it, and was cut out the same day. I was carried off the field almost immediately and sent to the hospital in the rear, where Dr. Rowland and Dr. Wisheart operated on me. Rowland did everything possible for me and on the same day started me and about a thousand more in ambulances to Whitehouse Landing. We came on to Washington and arrived here last night.

On June 19 Lieutenant Robertson obtained a leave of absence and returned to his home in North Argyle to convalesce. Two months later he was ordered to return to Seminary Hospital for re-examination. He was discharged "for disability from wounds received in action" on September 3, 1864. For his distinguished services, he received two brevet commissions--one from the President of the United States, conferring the rank of captain, and another from the governor of New York, according him the rank of colonel.

## COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

While practicing law in Whitehall, New York, before the war, Robert had met lovely Elizabeth Harrington Miller, eldest daughter of John A. and Catherine Miller.

Elizabeth was born at Fort Edward, New York, on September 12, 1840. Her father was a descendant of an old Colonial

family of Herkimer County; her mother was a daughter of Alexander and Isabel Robertson, who came from Blair Athol in Perthshire, Scotland, in 1804, and located among the Scots in Washington County, New York. Elizabeth's father died when she was four years old, leaving her mother with three young daughters--Elizabeth Harrington, Frances Catherine, and Helen Mary. Seven years later the mother also died, leaving the three girls in the care of an aunt, Mrs. Vaughn, who lived in Whitehall, New York. Elizabeth was united with the Presbyterian Church when only fourteen years of age. Some years later she met Robert and fell deeply in love.

The young couple had many mutual interests including their Scotch background. When Robert asked Elizabeth to make Robertson (her mother's maiden name) her married name, she agreed. The Civil War caused them to postpone their marriage plans. Several months after the close of the war, July 19, 1865, they were married in Whitehall.

The Robertsons lived in Washington, D. C., where Robert re-entered the legal profession as a member of the firm of Crocker, Robertson & Bramhall. Colonel Crocker was later appointed warden of the federal prison in Washington, and the firm was dissolved. Speaker of the House Scuyler Colfax (later Vice-President Colfax) from St. Joseph County, Indiana, advised the young attorney to move to Indiana. Colfax reasoned that the Hoosier state offered unusual opportunities to politically ambitious men since it was a pivotal state in elections. That and personal reasons caused the young couple to move to Fort Wayne in 1866. On January 20 of the following year, Robert's mother, Martha Stoddart Robertson, died at her home in Whitehall.

## LAW CAREER IN FORT WAYNE

Robertson's first professional association in the Summit City was with Lindley M. Ninde and Robert S. Taylor under the firm name of Ninde, Taylor & Robertson. This combination was dissolved by Ninde's retirement due to impaired health and Taylor's appointment as judge of the Common Pleas Court. Subse-

quently the young attorney formed a partnership with David P. Whedon, with whom he was associated until 1871, when Whedon moved to the Territory of Utah.

Although now an influential member of the Republican party, Robertson next formed a successful partnership with two prominent Democrats, Robert Lowry and Edward O'Rourke. This firm, known as Lowry, Robertson & O'Rourke, continued from 1871 to 1876. In 1875 the voters elected Lowry judge of the Superior Court and O'Rourke judge of the Circuit Court of Allen County.

Colonel Robertson was then associated with Judge James B. Harper and in 1894 formed a partnership with William S. O'Rourke, nephew of Judge Edward O'Rourke. The firm of Robertson & O'Rourke occupied a leading place at the bar for many years.

In his HISTORY OF THE MAUMEE RIVER BASIN, the Colonel evaluates his own professional career:

As a lawyer Colonel Robertson had a familiarity with legal principles and a ready perception of facts which won him the reputation of a sound and safe practitioner. Years of conscientious work brought an increase of practice and reputation. In the trial of cases he was uniformly courteous to court and opposing counsel, caring little for display, and in discussions of the principles of law he was noted for clearness of statement and candor. By a straightforward and honorable course he built up a large and lucrative legal business and was successful beyond the average of his calling.<sup>4</sup>

## ENTERING POLITICS

The Republican party in Fort Wayne early recognized Colonel Robertson's abilities as a potential leader in traditionally Democratic territory. In 1867 the voters elected him city attorney for two years. The following year the Republican party chose him as its candidate for state senator, but he was unable to overcome the Democratic majority. In 1871 he was appointed register in bankruptcy and served until 1875; during the same period he served as United States commissioner until his resignation in 1876.

At the Republican state convention in Indianapolis, February 22, 1876, his party persuaded him, without solicitation on his part, to seek the office of lieutenant governor. General Benjamin Harrison headed the state ticket as gubernatorial candidate.

After Robertson's nomination, the following article appeared in the TIMES of Troy, New York, July 8, 1876.

Washington County has produced many sons of whom she may justly be proud, but few are more worthy of her admiration than Colonel Robert S. Robertson, the Republican candidate for lieutenant governor of Indiana. His nomination was made by the unanimous action of the convention. Colonel Robertson is a gentleman of fine ability, commanding presence, and great force of character. He will honor the position to which he has been nominated and would even grace the executive chair of Indiana. After the election in that state in October, Colonel Robertson (then Lieutenant Governor-elect of Indiana) will pay a visit to his eastern friends and will take part in the contest in this state. We hope to hear his eloquent voice in Troy during the progress of the campaign.

In the fall of 1876 Colonel Robertson made a strong, dignified canvass of thirty-one counties; later in the campaign he contracted malarial fever, which prostrated him more than a month. The Republican ticket was defeated. This was the year of the Hayes-Tilden contest for the Presidency, and national issues probably took precedence.

## THE INDIANA POLITICAL SCENE

At the regular quadrennial election of 1884, Indiana went Democratic and elected Isaac P. Gray to the governorship and General Mahlon D. Manson to the lieutenant governorship. On the national scene Grover Cleveland and his party were swept into power. Two years later (July, 1886), President Cleveland offered Lieutenant Governor Manson an appointment as United States revenue collector for the Seventh District of Indiana, a more lucrative



position. This proposal appeased the anti-Gray faction of the Indiana Democrats, as it would thwart Governor Gray's aspirations for the United States Senate.

Mahlon D. Manson accepted the federal appointment, although he never formally resigned the office of lieutenant governor. In July, 1886, Governor Gray asked Democratic Attorney General Hord to determine whether or not the law authorized such a vacancy in the office of lieutenant governor. Attorney General Hord complied with the Governor's request. After an extensive investigation the Attorney General ruled that a successor to Manson must be elected at the biennial election of state officers scheduled for November 2, 1886. His ruling did not mention whether this election to the office of lieutenant governor was for a term of two or four years.

Alonzo Green Smith (familiarily called Green Smith), a senator from Jennings County, had been duly elected and had served as president pro tem of the Indiana Senate before that body adjourned in April, 1885. Senator Smith contended that no vacancy existed in the office because he was the acting lieutenant governor under the Constitution and the laws of the state. The Democratic State Central Committee, however, in its call for a state convention, provided for the nomination of a candidate for lieutenant governor, as did all other parties that made nominations for state offices.

Governor Gray appeared before the Democratic Convention in Indianapolis on August 11, 1886, presented the ruling of Attorney General Hord, and cited very strong constitutional reasons for an election to the vacant post. When nominations for lieutenant governor were declared in order, Senator Green Smith arose and insisted that no vacancy existed and that he was the acting lieutenant governor by virtue of his election as president of the Senate. Nevertheless, the Convention disregarded his contention and promptly decided to nominate a candidate for this position. Colonel John C. Nelson won the nomination.

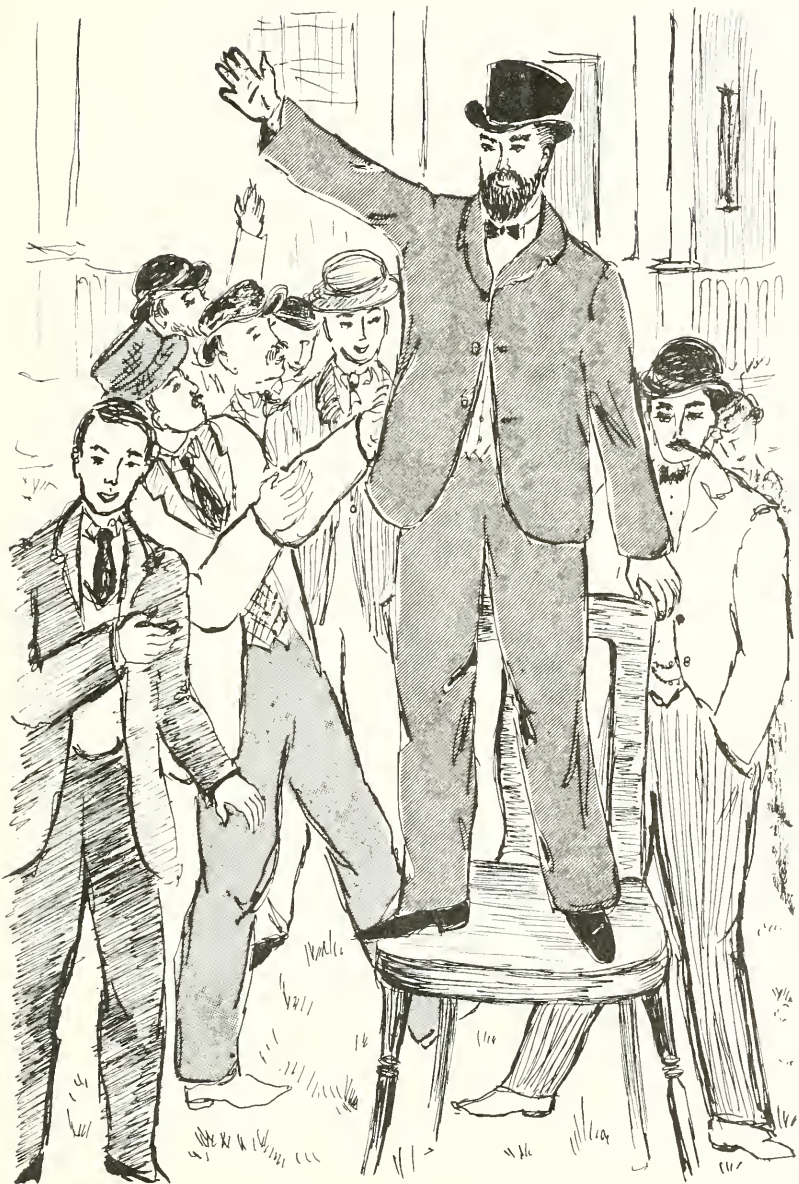
The Republican State Convention convened in late August and nominated Colonel Robert S. Robertson for the office of lieutenant governor. After the Convention adjourned, the Colonel returned home. The FORT WAYNE JOURNAL describes his enthusiastic reception thus:

His train was due to arrive in Fort Wayne at 7:40 p. m. Immediately there was great commotion among the Republicans. The City Band was engaged, and a crowd of men and boys marched down to the Wabash Depot. When the train came in, the band played, the men and boys cheered, and everybody was happy. Colonel Robertson was greeted as he stepped from the train and was rushed over to the Pittsburgh side where a hack stood waiting. The crowd did not exactly carry him on their shoulders but did the next thing. The team was taken from the hack, and in its stead was attached a long rope to which the boys harnessed themselves. The oriental procession started up Calhoun Street.

The procession did not halt until the residence of Colonel Robertson, corner of Broadway and Berry Street, was reached. There that gentleman mounted a chair and made a short address, thanking his friends for the honor they had conferred upon him. He also incidentally expressed a hope that the ides of November would see him holding down the lieutenant governor's chair.<sup>5</sup>

Both Colonel John C. Nelson, the Democratic nominee, and Colonel Robertson made thorough and creditable canvasses of the state. The election on November 2, 1886, resulted in a victory for the Republicans. They elected Robertson lieutenant governor by a majority of 3,323 votes. The Republicans also won a majority in the lower house of the legislature and elected eight state officers. However, the Democrats retained the governorship and, by means of hold-over Senators, the control of the Senate. The popularity of General Benjamin Harrison and Colonel Robertson was a decisive factor in the Republican success.

The Democrats rationalized the Republican victory by saying that sixteen thousand Democrats remained away from the polls but that only five thousand Republicans failed to vote. The independent vote undoubtedly influenced the 1886 election; many independent Hoosiers had repeatedly switched parties in the mid-term elections of 1870, 1874, 1878, and 1882. Indiana voters showed unmistakable signs of growing conservatism, although the two Hoosiers in the United States Senate, Daniel Voorhees and David Turpie, favored inflationist measures. The 1886 election was a reversal of the Democratic tide which had flowed so strongly in 1884. As nearly always happens, the party out of power made gains.



Colonel Robertson . . . made a short address.

## THE CONTROVERSY

The sequel to this very close division of power resulted in a critical and almost incredible period in the political history of Indiana. At the time, United States Senators were elected on joint ballot by the two houses of the state legislature, not the electorate. The 1887 session of the Indiana General Assembly had to elect a United States Senator to succeed General Harrison, whose term was expiring.

The political alignment of the membership of the legislature was almost equally matched. The Democrats held fifty seats, the Republicans forty-eight seats, and the Independents one seat. The lieutenant governor was entitled to cast his vote as president of the Senate. Therefore, since Indiana's choice of a federal senator would be determined by one vote, the Democrats perceived that were Robertson to take oath as lieutenant governor, their opportunity to elect a Democrat to the United States Senate would vanish. Thereupon, they repudiated the election, which both parties had entered in good faith. The January 11, 1887, issue of the INDIANAPOLIS NEWS stated,

Since they failed to elect their man, a change came over the spirit of their dream, and they held that the vacancy in the lieutenant governorship could only be filled by the Senate, whose presiding officer acts therein.

Republicans, on the contrary, maintained the validity of the election. Although the quarrel was purely partisan, the legality of the special election to fill the vacancy of the lieutenant governorship was questionable. The Constitution of Indiana declares that the lieutenant governor shall be elected every four years; the ruling that a vacancy in the office could be filled by a special election was the considered opinion of Attorney General Hord. Even though doubt existed as to the legality of the election, it must be admitted that the Democrats repudiated their party's previous position after they lost the election.

Senator Green Smith, a man of courage and ability, was determined to remain president of the Senate. At a meeting, leading Democrats determined to enjoin the issuing of election certifi-

cates to Colonel Robertson. They drafted a tentative injunction which set forth Smith's election as president pro tem of the Senate on April 13, 1885. It related Mahlon D. Manson's relinquishment of the lieutenant governorship, Smith's succession to the duties of the lieutenant governor, and prayed that Secretary of State Myers and his clerks and deputies be enjoined from delivering the sealed packages of election returns to the Speaker of the House. The law requires the clerks of the counties to place the vote tallies in sealed envelopes in the care of the Secretary of State (in this case Secretary Myers), who acts as custodian and is required to deliver them to the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Judge Ayers of Marion County Circuit Court ruled against the proposed injunction. In his opinion, he could not legally prevent a duly elected officer (Secretary of State Myers) from carrying out his duties. The Democrats appealed that decision to the Indiana Supreme Court, which later affirmed the decision.

#### THE EVENTS OF JANUARY 6, 1887

On the appointed day, January 6, 1887, the Fifty-fifth Session of the Indiana General Assembly convened in the State House in Indianapolis. The Senate met and was called to order; Reverend Duncan of Hall Place Church offered the opening prayer. He somewhat astonished the Senate by asking the Lord to effect a speedy settlement of the difficulties; otherwise untoward delay would prevent the enactment of badly needed legislation. The Senate promptly re-elected Green Smith president pro tem "in the absence of the lieutenant governor," and he proceeded to organize the Senate. No one questioned his right to preside after his election as long as the lieutenant governor was "absent or unable to act."

The Senate and the House of Representatives then met in joint session, and Republican Speaker of the House, Warren S. Sayre, announced the canvass of the vote for lieutenant governor. The Democratic members began and continued to protest violently. Nevertheless, the votes were counted; Speaker Sayre declared Robertson elected by a majority of 3,323 votes.

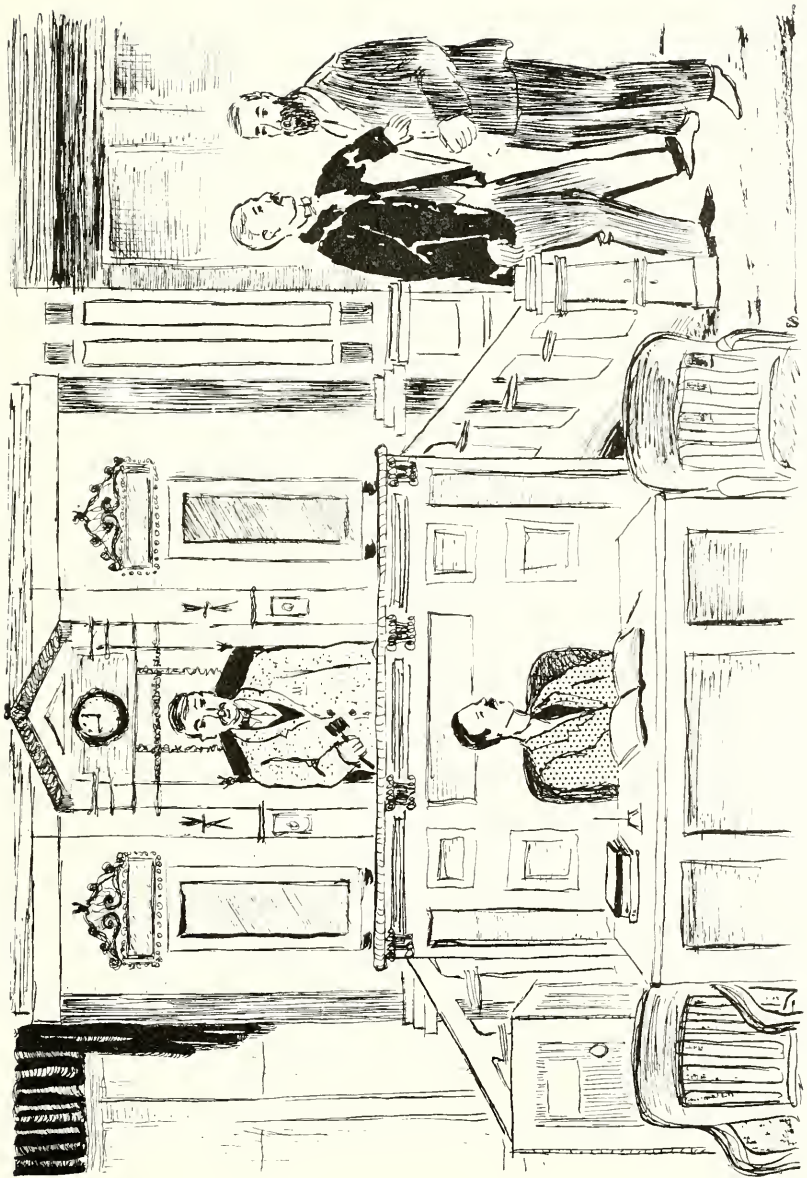
Although pandemonium reigned, Judge Walker administered

the oath of office to Robertson. Speaker Sayre turned over the gavel to Lieutenant Governor Robertson, who stood at the desk and pounded continuously for order. Nearly every Democrat stood and repeatedly shouted, "Mr. Speaker!" They refused to recognize Colonel Robertson as president of the joint session. Lieutenant Governor Robertson finally laid down the gavel and began to read his prepared speech of acceptance. Not a single word could be heard in the bedlam. Even though his voice was drowned in the uproar, he continued to read and ended, "I now declare this joint convention adjourned until Wednesday, the 19th . . . then and there to take action necessary to the election of a United States Senator." The joint session of the General Assembly dissolved in general disorder.

### THE INJUNCTION AGAINST ROBERTSON

Before Lieutenant Governor Robertson could further assert his right to preside over the Senate, the Democrats obtained a restraining order from Judge Ayers forbidding him to do so. Judge Ayers ruled that a majority vote of the electorate does not constitute an election to office, unless such an election is held at a time when the Constitution and the laws of Indiana so authorize. He stated that the courts have the authority to decide on the legality of an election; it is their duty to interpret the law. He also stated that the Indiana Constitution provides that the president pro tem of the Senate shall succeed to the office of lieutenant governor when that officer, for any cause, is not present. Ayers further declared that no vacancy existed in the office at the time of the election and that the election was illegal. He said that the terms of governor and lieutenant governor are for four years, that except for a term of four years, there can be no election, and that a term cannot commence at any time other than stated in the Constitution. He concluded, therefore, that Colonel Robertson had no just claim to the lieutenant governorship.<sup>6</sup>

The Republicans appealed this decision to the Supreme Court, which split on the issue and reversed the decision, February 23, 1887. The majority opinion of that court, delivered by



. . . the Lieutenant Governor started towards the chair .

Judge Elliott, ruled that the Circuit Court had no jurisdiction in the case and that, therefore, the Supreme Court had none. The injunction which the Circuit Court had issued was ordered dissolved. Three judges held that the General Assembly alone had jurisdiction. Judges Mitchell and Howk dissented, however. They handed down a minority opinion holding that no vacancy existed in the lieutenant governorship and, therefore, the Circuit Court had jurisdiction. But since the majority opinion of the highest court in Indiana dissolved the injunction, the entire matter was thrown back into the General Assembly.<sup>1</sup>

A deadlock resulted--the Democratic Senate refused to recognize Lieutenant Governor Robertson and sustained Green Smith as its presiding officer. Conversely, the Republican House would not recognize Green Smith and refused to do business with the Senate. The stalemate continued throughout the session and brought the legislative machinery of the state to an almost complete standstill.

#### THE EVENTS OF FEBRUARY 24, 1887

The stage was set for a tragicomedy unparalleled in the history of Indiana. On February 23, 1887, Lieutenant Governor Robertson was relieved from the restraining order under which he had been placed by Judge Ayers. The following day Robertson again attempted to assume his constitutional duty as president of the Senate. President Smith stood upon the rostrum as presiding officer; a burly doorkeeper guarded the short stairway to the rostrum. In the corridor outside, a crowd had gathered around the doors; the doorkeepers refused admission to all except a favored few. Lieutenant Governor Robertson arrived and ignored those who tried to stop him. He entered the chamber, threw off his overcoat and hat, sat down, and began to converse with Colonel John C. New. As Green Smith gavelled the Senate to order, the Lieutenant Governor started toward the chair. At the steps the doorkeeper barred his way; the Lieutenant Governor stepped forward, but the doorkeeper forced him to the foot of the stairs.

Robertson then walked to the clerk's desk, directly under



the president, and said in a clear and distinct voice:

I have been excluded from the position to which the people have elected me, and I wish to make a statement of my position. I wish to make a formal demand. . . .<sup>8</sup>

Democratic Senator Bailey raised the point of order that only members could speak before the Senate; President Smith sustained him. The motion was made that Robertson be ejected from the floor. The Chair ruled the motion carried, and the doorkeeper took Robertson by the arm and roughly escorted him to the door. The Lieutenant Governor did not resist but walked out quietly.

As Lieutenant Governor Robertson left the chamber, a wave of excitement swept over the partisans of both parties who crowded the corridors of the State House. They asked him what had happened. Robertson spoke briefly, related the events of the past hour, and cautioned against violence. Only his prudent conduct, his reasoned words, and his attitude prevented a disgraceful free-for-all. Several Republican Senators had attempted to follow Lieutenant Governor Robertson out of the chamber; since the Chair had ordered the doorkeepers to bar the exits; these Senators were forced to remain. They then sat quietly at the back of the room and refused to participate in the proceedings.

When news of the Senate's actions reached the Republican House, Speaker Sayre instructed the doorkeeper not to admit the Secretary of the Senate with any communications until the Senate had accepted Robertson as lieutenant governor. In retaliation, Senator Smith's attorneys, David Turpie and Charles Byfield, petitioned the Indiana Supreme Court for a rehearing of the appeal in the injunction case. Attorneys L. P. Michener and W. H. H. Miller represented Robertson.

## THE MONUMENT BILL

The bill providing for the erection of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument in Indianapolis was used by the House Republicans to force recognition of Robertson. The measure, which orig-

inated in the Senate, was passed February 18, 1887, by that body and was signed by Senator Smith. The bill was then sent to the House, which purposely withheld action until the last day of the session, March 3, 1887. The House then passed the bill; Lieutenant Governor Robertson and Speaker Sayre signed it and sent it to the governor's office for approval. Governor Gray immediately returned the bill to the Senate and directed President Smith's attention to the signatures. Turning to the Senate's secretary, Green Smith ordered: "Erase the name of R. S. Robertson and pass that bill back here!" The secretary struck out Robertson's name in red ink and handed the bill to Smith. Green Smith then appended his name as President of the Senate and transmitted the bill to the Governor. He signed the bill, and it became law.

#### THE CLOSE OF THE FIFTY-FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

As the final days of the session approached, members of both parties realistically agreed that some amicable arrangement had to be reached. The Conference Committee, composed of members from both houses and both parties, met secretly and agreed upon a plan (later effected) for a joint session. Senator Smith was to call the convention to order, and Speaker Sayre was to preside; Smith was to announce the vote, and Sayre was to adjourn the joint session. Members of both parties concurred in this strategy.

Many Republicans felt that Speaker Sayre deserted Lieutenant Governor Robertson in this compromise. Some members expressed disappointment and dissatisfaction that Lieutenant Governor Robertson was not given a chance to take the chair; they seemed to forget that the presence of the sheriff and his deputies in the Senate Chamber (with orders to serve a warrant for contempt) obviously had made such an attempt impossible.

With a controversy raging over the lieutenant governorship, Governor Gray could not seek Indiana's seat in the United States Senate, especially since Robertson was Republican. Gray knew his party would not accept Senator Green Smith as acting governor, and he upset the plans of enemies in his own party by refusing to

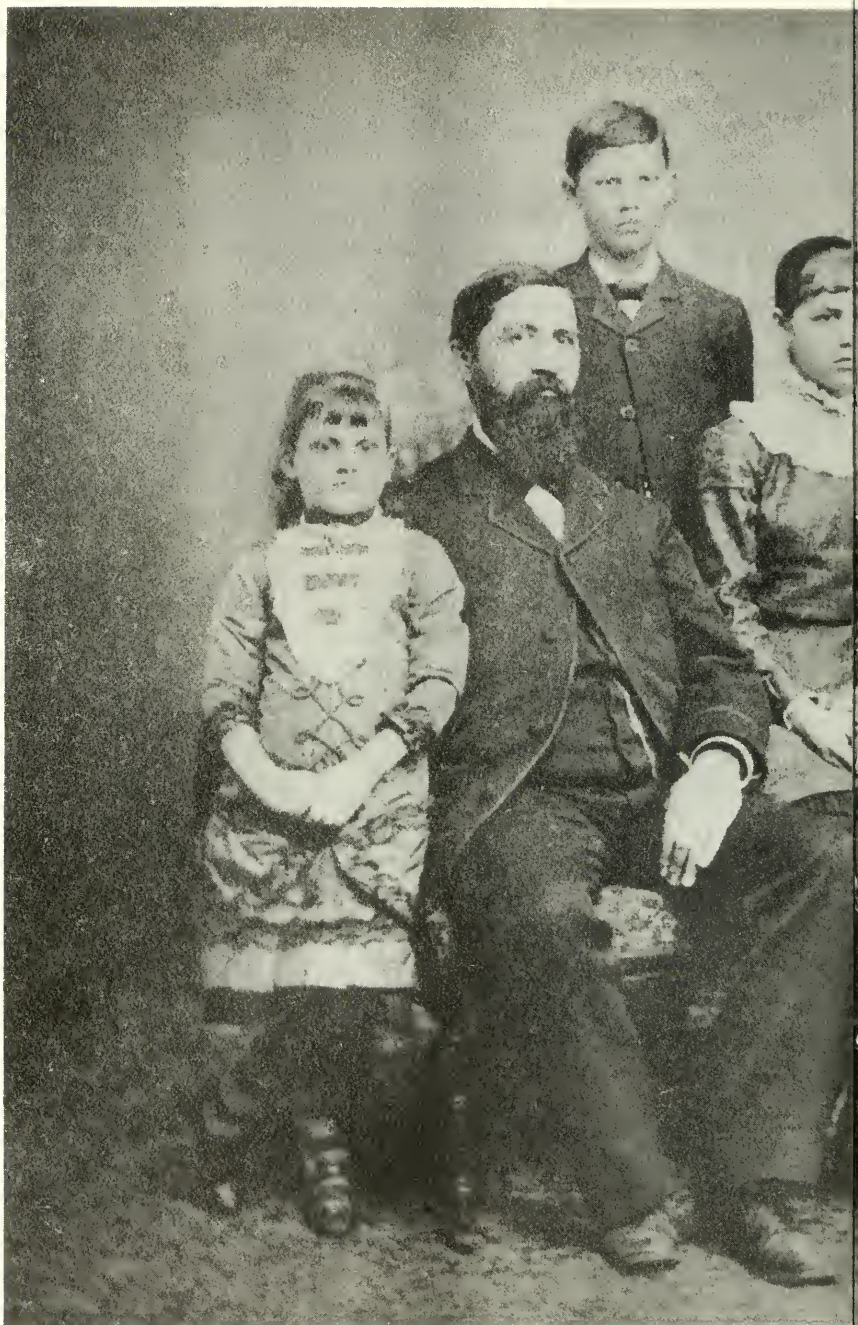
support their candidate. Instead, on the sixteenth ballot, he threw his support to David Turpie, who was elected United States Senator from Indiana.

Although duly elected by the people, Lieutenant Governor Robertson had not been allowed to serve, and both parties were guilty of blind partisanship and neglect of the best interests of the state.

Accomplishing very little during the session, the legislature, nevertheless, did pass an act appropriating \$125,000 to pay members' salaries and expenses. In a sense, the Republican legislators had recognized Senator Smith's de facto authority by cashing their pay vouchers bearing his signature. Republican Attorney General Michener had ruled that Smith was entitled to six dollars per day--a senator's regular salary. He also ruled that Robertson was entitled to the daily eight-dollar stipend of the lieutenant governor.

In the closing Democratic caucus, when a new president of the Senate should have been elected, Smith pleaded to retain his position as president. He contended that his petition for the rehearing in the Indiana Supreme Court was based on the fact that he was President of the Senate; and if another president were chosen, he argued, his petition would go out on a plea in abatement. The Supreme Court overruled the petition for a rehearing in the injunction proceedings of Senator Smith against Lieutenant Governor Robertson on March 12, 1887.

In seeking to obtain his restraining order against Robertson, Senator Smith was obliged to furnish bond for court costs and attorneys' fees. After the case was thrown out by the Supreme Court, Robertson brought suit against Green Smith for the attorneys' fees and additional costs which Robertson had incurred. The suit was tried in Superior Court; the verdict: Green Smith was not liable on the bond for the attorneys' fees incurred by Robertson. The latter appealed the decision to the Supreme Court; this highest court reversed the decision and declared that Smith was liable on the bond and remanded the case for trial to the lower court to determine the amount of liability. The matter was settled out of court much later; Smith compromised by paying Robertson five hundred dollars.<sup>9</sup>



Annie  
Nicholas  
Mrs. Robertson  
Louise  
Colonel Robertson



son

Robert Strowan

Nicholas R. Robertson

Mabel

## THE REPUBLICAN GUBERNATORIAL NOMINATION

Shortly after Lieutenant Governor Robertson's return home, the FORT WAYNE DAILY SENTINEL published an article citing his efforts to locate the state school for mental defectives in Fort Wayne.

The Republicans and their ladies comfortably filled the lower floor of the Temple Auditorium last evening. Mrs. Robert S. Robertson and a party of her lady friends occupied the right box, while Mrs. George E. Bursley and her friends occupied the box on the left. Colonel Robert S. Robertson, Speaker Sayre of Wabash, and Senator DeMotte of Valparaiso and a number of distinguished local Republicans were on the stage. President George C. Bursley of the Morton Club was chairman and in a neat way introduced the Haydn Quartet.

Colonel Robertson was introduced and was accorded a flattering reception. He has a warm place in the hearts of his Republican friends, and he stirred his admirers to applause by declaring that the "Democratic party was organized to retard the march of civilization and block the wheels of progress."

Before closing he called attention to the fact that the bill locating the feeble-minded asylum at Fort Wayne would never have passed the House but for his personal exertions and appeals to Speaker Sayre and other Republican leaders. They had determined to defeat the Fort Wayne measure in their purpose to punish the Allen County Democratic representatives for their failure to accord to Colonel Robertson that support and courtesy they affected to entertain for their fellow-townsmen.

After the meeting the Morton Club tendered Colonel Robertson and his guests a reception in its parlors, and the Colonel has every reason to be proud of the manner in which he was greeted by his Republican friends.<sup>10</sup>

The Morton Club, a rather exclusive club of wealthy and prominent Republicans, was doing effective work recruiting promising young members. In 1888 Republican circles talked of the possibility of nominating Robertson for governor. Speaker Sayre confided to friends that he would accept the nomination for lieutenant-

ant governor. The newspapers discussed the forthcoming nominations in frequent articles during the summer of 1888.

For twenty-two years Colonel Robertson has been a prominent figure in state politics. In all that time he has received no important office. He has given his time, his energy, and his money freely to the cause of Republicanism. He has been prominently mentioned in connection with the governorship for twelve years. Ordinarily he should have been entitled to it, for he made the race for lieutenant governor in 1886 and carried it for his party after the Democrats had carried it in 1884 for Cleveland and Governor Gray.<sup>41</sup>

A reporter asked Colonel Robertson,

"Under any circumstances, would you accept the nomination for lieutenant governor?"

"I would not. I cannot permit myself to be impoverished by that office any longer. I have made the race for it twice at an expense of \$6,000, to say nothing of the loss of time, which has caused my professional business to greatly suffer. Two years more of the lieutenant governorship would, I fear, bring my family pretty close to the doors of the poorhouse. You may say that positively, under no circumstances, will I again accept the nomination for lieutenant governor."<sup>42</sup>

Many Hoosiers regarded former-Governor Porter as the strongest and most popular Republican in the state, because he had carried the state in 1880 after Harrison's defeat in 1876. Since Porter had experienced the usual honors as Indiana's chief executive, some believed that neither the prestige of office nor the salary would hold much attraction for the independently wealthy former-governor. However, it was thought that both would have been very acceptable to Lieutenant Governor Robertson. When friends first asked Porter if he would accept the nomination, he thanked them and said that he would not. In 1886 he had pledged his word to support Lieutenant Governor Robertson in 1888.

Republican political maneuvers to draft Porter continued for six months. During this period Lieutenant Governor Robert-

son, urged by his supporters, made a thorough canvass in his own behalf. On August 6, 1888, the anti-Robertson faction in the state convention attempted to clear the way for the Porter boom. These men asked the potential nominees to sign an agreement withholding their names from the convention in favor of Porter; Robertson's friends received the proposition with marked disfavor. The Lieutenant Governor demanded to know the authors and supporters of the proposal. He felt that the attempt to insinuate that he alone stood in Porter's way was unfair and was intended to arouse prejudice against him. Robertson believed that Porter was sincere in declining the nomination and stated that he would allow his own name to go before the convention.

Concerning Porter's availability, the FORT WAYNE SENTINEL reported that Robertson had accepted the former-governor's declination as he had the refusal of other potential contenders, for he assumed that Porter was sincere.

In the face of this declination I do not see how Porter could be a candidate or accept the nomination. As to the remarks expressing kind feeling toward Governor Porter by the people of the state, I have also received hundreds of letters and many verbal assurances that my candidacy is desirable. Were it not for these assurances and demands of my friends, I should not be in the way of any gentleman, although I believe I have a right as any other man to aspire to honors for which any other member of the party may aspire. I have made no attack on any man and am only in the hands of my friends and the Republican party of Indiana.<sup>13</sup>

Unfortunately, Lieutenant Governor Robertson was a controversial figure in the public mind. His enemies unfavorably aligned him with the aristocracy of the learned, and they neither could nor would understand him. The opposition newspapers alleged that in 1876 he had coined the derogatory label of "Blue Jeans Williams" as a slur on the work clothes of the laboring man. When he was candidate for lieutenant governor in 1886, the newspapers quoted Robertson as saying that the Republican platform was "good enough for the beer guzzling Dutch of Allen and the prohibition Quakers of Wayne"<sup>14</sup> counties. Within his own party, some charged that in certain local elections he had spoken in behalf of a Demo-



crat whom he believed worthy and had not supported the straight Republican ticket.

Before the convention opened, George E. Bursley and a delegation of two hundred prominent Republicans went to the state capital over the Cincinnati and Louisville Railroad in a special train provided by Superintendent William W. Worthington, an ardent admirer of Colonel Robertson. The train was decorated with Robertson banners.

The Lieutenant Governor and his party occupied suites at the Dennison House in Indianapolis. Many wives accompanied their husbands. The charming and beautiful Mrs. Robertson was hostess for the Colonel; as she welcomed guests in their reception room, she won new friends and supporters for her husband. Robertson's friends thought that he could poll a thousand votes from Democrats in his district, and they appeared confident of his nomination.

Though former-Governor Porter had repeatedly declined the nomination verbally and had published three letters refusing to be a candidate, the Porter boom had grown into a "Draft Porter" movement. After conferring with Lieutenant Governor Robertson at the convention, Porter was asked again if he would refuse the nomination.

He replied:

Yes, I do. When I said about six months ago that I would not be a candidate for governor, I spoke deliberately and meant precisely what I said. Several gentlemen who were understood to be candidates for governor were present, and I said it to give them notice that I would not be in their way. I have said, I suppose, a hundred times . . . that I should abide by my word as it was then spoken. . . . A few days ago, under a strong sense of obligation to speak again because I thought my word might not have been remembered by my friends, I published a letter . . . stating that I could not be a candidate and could not even accept a nomination were it tendered. . . . I have bound myself by every obligation of honor. Only last Saturday night I repeated . . . that I felt, and my children felt with me, that I could not now honorably accept the Republican nomination for governor under any circumstances.<sup>15</sup>

Following this statement the Porter campaign collapsed completely. On the floor of the convention, Representative Johnson proposed the nomination of General Alvin P. Hovey of Posey County, who was considered "the most gallant volunteer general of the West." Robertson's friends could not even get the floor to propose his name.

The enthusiasm for Hovey was state wide; when the balloting began, he seemed certain to be nominated. Finally a movement to make Hovey's nomination unanimous was led by Ira J. Chase; one candidate after another seconded the motion; it was finally clinched by Lieutenant Governor Robertson's withdrawal in his favor. The nomination by acclamation of Ira J. Chase for lieutenant governor was enthusiastically received and immediately adopted.

In August, 1888, the Republican National Convention in Chicago nominated General Benjamin Harrison for the Presidency. The Democrats nominated Grover Cleveland for a second term. Although the American people gave Cleveland a plurality of 100,000 votes, the electoral college declared Harrison elected with 233 votes and Cleveland 169 votes.

Some Republican leaders had professed to believe throughout the campaign that Colonel Robertson had been elected lieutenant governor in 1886 for four years. As an alibi for their failure to support his nomination for governor, they gave the flimsy excuse that such a course would have nullified their position. They pretended to believe that he should legally preside at the organization of the approaching legislative session and urged him to do so.

Colonel Robertson said,

I do not believe that any serious opposition to my acting as such officer will be made. The Democratic majority in the Senate will be considerably smaller than it was two years ago, and, besides, there is no United States Senator to elect. I have an idea they will content themselves with filing a protest against me. I only know that I intend to do my whole duty in the premises, although, personally, it is a matter of small moment to me who presides at the opening.<sup>16</sup>



Colonel Robert S. Robertson

At the close of the Fifty-fifth session of the Indiana General Assembly, the Senate had failed to elect either a president or a president pro tem. Green Smith's term as state senator had expired; hence, he could not preside. The Democrats made no secret of their intention to prevent Robertson from exercising the duties of his office. The law provides that the lieutenant governor shall call the Senate to order and preside over its deliberations. If the lieutenant governor is absent, the auditor of state shall act in his stead.

Even if the Democrats prevented Lieutenant Governor Robertson from opening the session, Auditor Carr, a staunch Republican, would not preside over the Senate. The fact that the Republicans had nominated and elected Chase lieutenant governor (even though they had claimed in 1886 that Robertson was elected to that office for four years) gave the Democrats an irrefutable argument against Robertson.

#### THE FIFTY-SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Fifty-sixth General Assembly converged upon the State House for the opening session. Visitors came to stare curiously at the legislators and office seekers; many sensationalists came to watch Lieutenant Governor Robertson. Learning that the Republicans planned to pack the Senate Chamber and galleries, the Democrats ordered tickets issued only to senators and those whom they designated. Long before the doors of the Senate Chamber were opened on January 10, 1889, crowds had gathered in the corridors. Doorkeeper Hamilton appeared at the entrance to the Senate Chamber and began to admit those who bore the requisite admission slips; considerable grumbling was heard from those not so fortunate.

Colonel Robertson arrived early and elbowed his way through the crowds directly to the door. David E. Bulger, who had laid violent hands on the Colonel during the last session of the Senate, stood guard at the entrance and stopped him with a lordly gesture.

"I wish to go in," said the Colonel.

"Have you a ticket?" asked Bulger.

"I have not, but I am the President of the Senate and demand admission."

"You can't have it," replied the redoubtable Bulger. "I have instructions not to admit anyone to the chamber unless he is a member of the Senate, a state officer, or a representative of the press. Please stand back and make room for the gentlemen with tickets."

Colonel Robertson moved aside and made no further attempt to gain admission. A crowd of enthusiastic followers surrounded him and demanded permission to batter down the doors. He smiled but shook his head. Fifteen or twenty well-known Democrats were admitted without tickets. The Lieutenant Governor spoke of the injustice sadly. Though occasionally lapsing into a bitter mood, he controlled his feelings very well. He had a smile and jest for every friend who approached, and he laughed when informed of the proceedings inside the chamber.

## INSIDE THE SENATE AND HOUSE

Inside the Senate Chamber members were shaking hands and conversing. At ten o'clock Judge Mitchell of the Indiana Supreme Court entered the chamber, and the members began to settle down. The news that Lieutenant Governor Robertson had been refused admission was the subject of general conversation when Judge Mitchell reached the presiding officer's chair and rapped for order. He then inquired, "Can someone inform me as to whether or not Mr. Carr, the Auditor of State, is in the Senate Chamber?" A Republican senator replied that Mr. Carr was present, and the Auditor arose from his seat in the rear of the chamber. Asked if he would preside during the organization of the Senate, Bruce Carr advanced and replied,

Gentlemen, I cannot assume the responsibility of organizing the Senate. I know that Lieutenant Governor Robertson, who is the legal and constitutional presiding officer of this body, is at the door demanding admittance. Hence, it would be an unwarranted

usurpation of power on my part to assume to organize the Senate.<sup>17</sup>

Senator Johnson then claimed the attention of the Senate and read the following message from the Lieutenant Governor outside:

Indianapolis, Indiana  
January 10, 1889

Honorable Henry M. Johnson, State Senator:

I have the honor to inform you that I am at the door of the Senate, ready to fulfill the duties of lieutenant governor as presiding officer of the Senate, but I am refused admission to the Senate Chamber. I request that you call the attention of the Senate to that fact and inform it that I am "present," and "able to attend" and can preside at the sessions of the Senate.

R. S. ROBERTSON,  
Lieutenant Governor of Indiana<sup>18</sup>

During the reading of this letter Senator Barrett disputed Senator Johnson's right to be heard; Judge Mitchell vainly tried to quiet Johnson. Other Democrats joined Barrett in his protest, but Johnson, raising his voice above all the din, read the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the senators are informed that, as a matter of fact, Robert S. Robertson, the duly-elected and acting lieutenant governor of the state, is now at the door of the Senate and asking admission to proceed with the organization of the Senate; therefore  
RESOLVED, that the Auditor of State direct the doorkeeper to admit the said Lieutenant Governor upon the floor of the Senate and that he do preside in the organization of this Senate.<sup>19</sup>

The disgraceful scene continued; Judge Mitchell could not control the Senate.

On the suggestion of a Democratic senator, a roll call was ordered. Senators Johnson and DeMotte again protested the usurpation and declared that they would present their protests in writ-

ing. The Republican senators refused to answer the roll call; when Judge Mitchell asked the members to stand and take the customary oath to support the Constitution, the Republicans refused, repeatedly protested, and would take no part in the proceedings.

Senator Barrett presented a resolution declaring Senator James F. Cox President of the Senate in the absence of the Lieutenant Governor; over the vehement protests of the Republicans, it was adopted. The Republicans protested the administering of the oath to Senator Cox and denounced it as "a miserable farce." Judge Mitchell left the Senate Chamber as soon as he was relieved of the unpleasant duty forced upon him by his party. Lieutenant Governor-elect Chase sat in the Senate Chamber as a spectator. Invited to a chair on the rostrum, he accepted, and the Senate got under way.

In the House of Representatives Secretary of State Charles Griffin called the members to order. Following the chaplain's prayer, Griffin solemnly administered the oath to all members. A message from the Senate announced its organization with Senator Cox as presiding officer.

Judge Cullen of Rush County proposed the following resolution, which was later adopted:

RESOLVED, that the House of Representatives, having been informed of the organization of the Senate by the election of James F. Cox as presiding officer of that body, hereby refuses to recognize that gentleman as a legally elected officer, and declares that Robert S. Robertson is legally elected and acting lieutenant governor of Indiana and should preside over the present Senate.<sup>20</sup>

On the following day the proceedings of the General Assembly were quiet and peaceful. No one had difficulty gaining admission, except Robertson. At half-past nine that morning, Doorkeeper Bulger found himself face to face with Robertson, who stood on the threshold.

The January 11, 1889, issue of the INDIANAPOLIS NEWS carried the following account of the indignity:

"Stop!" exclaimed the surprised doorkeeper, as he thrust his arm across the doorway.

"Do you refuse me admission this morning?" the Lieutenant Governor asked.

"Most certainly I do," replied Bulger, "I still have orders not to admit you." As Colonel Robertson stepped back, the door was closed in his face.

At the inaugural ceremonies that same evening in the English Theater, Colonel Robertson expressed his feelings emphatically:

"Governor Gray escorted Governor-elect Hovey to the stage, but Ira J. Chase was allowed to flounder along behind like a motherless chicken. I, as the retiring Lieutenant Governor, should have escorted him to his seat."<sup>21</sup>

When a reporter asked if he were through, the Colonel replied:

"Yes, sir, if I had it all to do over again I would do just as I have done. I would not make a bully of myself to please the element that seemed to expect it. . . . I know who are criticising me. It is the cowardly compromisers, who, when lashed into it by the public press, threw the blame on me. . . . I know, too, who are commending me. The people are on my side."

"You will call on the courts again, then?"

"No, sir. I consider that I have been misdirected. If the Republican party wants to be vindicated, it must vindicate itself; I will not do so. As I have often said before, I am glad to lay down the livery of a public servant and don the royal purple of an American citizen."<sup>22</sup>

Thus ended Colonel Robertson's controversial term as Lieutenant Governor of Indiana. He returned to his home in Fort Wayne soon afterwards.

## HOME LIFE

Colonel Robertson was five feet ten inches tall and weighed





Elizabeth Robertson

approximately one hundred seventy pounds. His eyes and hair were black, and he wore a black beard most of his adult life. His complexion was dark and ruddy. Dignified in appearance, the Colonel walked with an erect carriage. His disposition was always genial, and he was noted for his courteous manners.

Elizabeth Robertson was a kind, gentle woman, who was always considerate of the feelings of her family and friends. Mrs. Robertson was a beautiful woman; her appearance was often compared with Gainsborough's portrait of Sarah Kemble Siddons, a beautiful and talented actress of the eighteenth-century English stage.

Five children were born to the couple--Nicholas, Louise, Robert Strowan, Mabel, and Annie. The parents were religious, kind, gentle, and most indulgent to their children at a time when strict discipline was the rule. The Colonel employed servants to help his wife care for the house and children. Colonel and Mrs. Robertson resided for a time near the Pennsylvania Railroad; in 1873 the Colonel built a home on the southeast corner of Berry Street and Broadway. The location was not, perhaps, the safest in which to raise a family, for it was near the old Wabash and Erie Canal. Although the towpaths and bridges along the Canal provided fascinating places to play, the banks were often slippery; occasionally a Robertson child or playmate fell in and had to be fished out. Sometimes the Colonel strolled with his children along the canal banks where he would pick up unusual stones and point out the various minerals, their names, and uses. Frequently the children skipped stones across the water or threw them into the Canal to watch the splash. Occasionally the father gave them nature lessons on the plants and insects found along the banks. Undoubtedly they profited from his efforts, but they lacked his avid curiosity about the natural world about them. Hoffman's Lumber Mill was located on Fulton Street north of Main Street. Great piles of lumber and logs lay in the yard--a challenge to the children of the neighborhood. Often the Robertson children and their companions climbed there despite repeated warnings of danger and possible injury.

Many friends and acquaintances came to the house to enjoy pleasant companionship and hospitality or to study in Colonel Robertson's library. Aspiring young lawyers were especially wel-

come. The younger Robertsons were much sought guests at many parties of the younger generation. Henry Lane Wallace, son of General Lew Wallace, was a close friend of Nicholas Robertson. All in all, the Robertson family was a happy one.

Colonel Robertson's thoughtfulness for others is illustrated by the following incident, paraphrased from the FORT WAYNE DAILY GAZETTE of December 5, 1882.

Governor Albert G. Porter chose Colonel Robertson Supreme Court judge to fill a vacancy caused by the resignation of Judge Worden. Colonel Robertson declined the honor and asked the Governor to name William H. Coombs in his stead. Mr. Coombs was still active at the age of seventy and was the oldest practicing attorney in the state; Robertson urged the appointment as a fitting recognition.

For his gallantry Colonel Robertson was promised higher and greater honors by the Republican party. He had frequently mentioned desiring the position of United States district attorney, or at least marshal; ironically enough, he was not rewarded by such an appointment.

Soon after his inauguration in 1889, President Benjamin Harrison offered Colonel Robertson a position as judge of the Indian Territory, but the Colonel declined the honor reluctantly for personal reasons. His lifetime interest in the American Indian had begun in his boyhood. Every phase of the red man's life, history, customs, and legends fascinated him. The built-in cabinets beneath the bookcases in his library held numerous Indian relics and curios. The major portion of the collection is now in the Smithsonian Institute.

In May, 1889, the Robertsons went to Washington, D. C. at the request of President Harrison. A news item in an early May issue of the WASHINGTON JOURNAL noted:

Colonel Robertson came here on the special invitation of President Harrison, by whom he was entertained at dinner on the day after his arrival. The next day a dinner was given at the residence of the Attorney General by Mrs. Miller in honor of Mrs. Robertson. The Colonel and General William Wade Dudley [National Republican party treasurer] are warm friends of many years standing and were seen much together during the Colonel's stay in

the city. General Dudley gave a dinner in honor of the Colonel and his lady, at which . . . some of the most bon ton of Washington society were present. On the whole the Colonel must have taken his departure for home highly elated with his visit. It is known why the Colonel was invited and what he accomplished, as well as the position he sustains to the present administration.

## ROBERTSON IN UTAH

The history and administration of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (popularly known as the Mormon Church) had long deeply interested Colonel Robertson. His private library included one of the best collections of books on Mormonism in the Midwest. The Colonel had made a thorough study of the origin of the religion, its leaders, doctrine and tenets of faith, and especially the controversial issue of his day--polygamy. He was keenly aware of the impact of the Mormons on the history of the American West and had often expressed a desire to study Mormonism at close range.

President Benjamin Harrison knew Robertson's interest and in May, 1889, offered him an appointment as a member of the Board of Registration and Elections of the Territory of Utah at an annual salary of \$5,000. Robertson accepted the post with considerable pleasure. He journeyed to Utah with the other commission members in September, 1889.

The Christmas Day, 1889, issue of the FORT WAYNE JOURNAL relates one of the Colonel's experiences in Salt Lake City.

Colonel Robert S. Robertson is at home from Salt Lake City. He will not forget his visit, according to this story from the SALT LAKE TIMES:

Last night when the members of the Utah Commission were wrapped in the arms of Morpheus, Colonel Robertson, one of the members, was awakened by some unusual noise. He began to dress and discovered that \$65 had been taken from his purse. Nothing else, however, had been carried off.

Colonel Robertson awakened Colonel George L. Godfrey, the chairman of the commission, and asked if he had also been robbed. Godfrey found that his pocketbook had been ransacked and \$28 were missing. Colonel Alvin Saunders was the third victim; \$40 had been taken from him. It is probable that the awakening of Colonel Robertson thwarted the intention of the burglars to visit General McClermand and Colonel Page. Their rooms and the safe were left undisturbed.

Robertson later commented on the political situation in Utah in the following interview:

Colonel Robertson was in Indianapolis preparatory to his leaving for Utah. The United States Commission, of which he is a member, is to meet there soon to arrange for the August elections in that territory.

"Only county officers," he said, "are to be chosen, and the result will be largely favorable to the Mormons. Except in Salt Lake, Odgen, and one or two other places in the territory, the gentiles [non-Mormons] have no chance of electing anybody. In many county districts only Mormons vote, and the condition will be no better until the polygamists are disfranchised."

The reporter asked, "Would relief come through the Cullom bill?"

"It is the wish of the gentiles to have that bill passed before the November election, when a delegate to Congress is to be elected. It will be the entering wedge, and there is no doubt that a gentile can be sent to Congress. Until then, the Mormons will continue to have the majority."<sup>23</sup>

During his term he made many lasting friends in Utah. Colonel Robertson served as a Utah commissioner for four years. In 1893 Grover Cleveland was inaugurated for a second term after a Democratic sweep in the previous fall election. President Cleveland relieved Robertson of his post shortly afterwards.

Frequently one of the children accompanied Colonel Robertson on his trips; Nicholas made the long journey to Utah with his father. It is believed that Nicholas visited for a time with his mother's sister, Mrs. Helen Mary Hayes, in Heber, Utah. He

studied law in Salt Lake City in the office of a family friend. After he had decided to settle permanently in Utah, he married and became a successful attorney.

## SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, brilliant social seasons with frequent receptions, parties, and balls diverted the members of the wealthy and prominent families of Fort Wayne. Colonel and Mrs. Robertson were guests at many of the important social functions of their day. They also entertained friends frequently in their own home, where guests were hospitably received.

Relatives frequently visited the family. The father of Colonel Robertson, Nicholas Robertson of Argyle, New York, was particularly welcome. The venerable man, hale and hearty at the age of seventy-eight, arrived in the spring of 1881 and visited with his relatives for a considerable period.

At another time General and Mrs. Church came from Michigan to spend a week and to hear Colonel Robertson give a benefit lecture entitled "From the Wilderness to Spotsylvania" before the Thalonian Literary Society at the Berry Street Methodist Church. General Church was an old friend and comrade, who had once assisted the wounded Colonel from the battlefield.

One of the children, Annie (later Mrs. William N. Whitely) recalls that while her parents entertained their guests downstairs, the children were very busy upstairs trying on the guests' wraps and enjoying a grand time creating their own style show.

On the occasion of their silver wedding anniversary in 1890, the Robertsons entertained many friends at a soiree. The following excerpts from the pages of the Society Section of the GAZETTE describe the happy event:

The handsome West Berry Street home of Colonel and Mrs. Robert S. Robertson, which was decorated with a profusion of lovely flowers, was the scene of a brilliant reception last evening. Their friends gathered in response to the following invitation:



. . . the children were busy trying on the guests' wraps.

Colonel and Mrs. R. S. Robertson  
at Home,  
Saturday evening, July nineteenth,  
from eight until twelve.

Shortly after the appointed hour, the guests began to arrive and were received at the parlor entrance by Colonel and Mrs. Robertson and their daughters; Mrs. Robertson wore a chic gown of pale sea-green silk and crepe de Chine.

The spacious rooms were soon filled; a beautiful picture was presented by Fort Wayne society. Beautifully gowned and bejeweled women moved about the elaborately decorated house. Bric-a-brac and curios, gathered in extensive travel, could be seen on the mantels among the flowers. Refreshments were served by Seidel in keeping with the elegance of the entire affair.

The hospitality of Colonel and Mrs. Robertson will be pleasantly remembered by those who were present. Many beautiful and costly presents were presented them by their friends. At a late hour the guests took their leave, wishing the worthy pair another quarter century of happiness and prosperity.<sup>24</sup>

## TASTES AND HOBBIES

Colonel Robertson was a connoisseur of fine cuisine and recognized and enjoyed superior foods and wines. In his travels, when he had enjoyed unusual dishes, it was his practice to go to the kitchen and ask the chef for the recipe, which was usually freely given. It is believed that Colonel Robertson introduced angel food cake and Saratoga chips (potato chips) to Fort Wayne.

Colonel Robertson had many hobbies; he devoted much leisure time to the pursuit of genealogy. He had traced his own Scotch ancestry back to the fifteenth century. Presumably he had searched family and church records in Scotland when he traveled abroad in his later life.

The Colonel often spent Sunday afternoons in his library clipping articles about science, art, and poetry from newspapers and magazines and pasting them in his scrapbooks for future ref-



erence. Sometimes he liked to examine prehistoric fossils and historic relics from his collections.

Colonel Robertson was interested in minerals from his youth. His Civil War diary includes at least two references to metals and minerals observed in a mine and a quartz crushing mill in Virginia. His mineral collection included specimens of rock from all parts of America, polished, unpolished, and semi-precious stones. He had pieces of fan-shaped coral and strange underwater formations. Children were attracted by a foot-long piece of limestone called a "bending" stone, which would actually bend several degrees. Colonel Robertson also kept and displayed the Minie ball which the surgeons had removed from his body after his wounds at Totopotomoy Creek.

As a boy in his father's mills, he had learned the art of cabinetmaking. He fashioned files for his documents which looked like books when placed on the shelves. He designed special cases for his Indian relics and one for his war medals.

## INTEREST IN LIBRARIES

Of all his hobbies, reading was his favorite lifetime pursuit. Colonel Robertson was an omnivorous reader; he was justifiably proud of his fine library, which boasted over thirty-five hundred volumes.

His chosen field was history; a portion of his library included the standard works of reputable American and European historians as well as a large number of volumes on Fort Wayne and Indiana history. There was also his previously mentioned collection of books on Mormonism.

The English and American classics were well represented. A random glance at titles in literature reveals the forty-five volume *BRITISH ESSAYISTS*, edited by Alexander Chalmers; John Bell's *BRITISH THEATER* in twenty-two volumes; a first edition of Sir Walter Scott's *MINSTRELSY OF THE BORDER* and his Waverly novels; and George Eliot's *POEMS*. Colonel Robertson especially prized the autographed first editions of works by Hoosier authors, who were his personal friends.

Among his rare books, a bibliophile might note a French edition of Father Hennepin's NEW DISCOVERY OF A VERY LARGE COUNTRY IN AMERICA BETWEEN NEW MEXICO AND THE NORTHERN OCEAN (Utrecht, 1697). Other rarities include Le Page du Pratz's HISTORY OF LOUISIANA (Paris, 1768) and the CODES AND INSTITUTES OF JUSTINIAN (1548-68).

Colonel Robertson loaned his books to his friends and acquaintances with few reservations. The faculties at Jefferson School and the Fort Wayne High School, where his children were educated, frequently borrowed his books. So great was his love of reading that, though money was limited, he always somehow managed to buy more books. His collections were of far-reaching influence to many citizens and to the community.

His bookplate, affixed to the inside front cover of each volume, bore the following legend:

This book belongs to R. S. Robertson  
If it be borrowed by a friend  
Most welcome shall he be  
To borrow, read, but then return to me.  
Not that imparted knowledge doth  
Diminish learnings store,  
But books, I find, if often lent,  
Return to me no more.

Across the lower part of the plate this sage advice was given:

Read slowly; pause frequently; think seriously;  
Keep cleanly; return duly, with the corners of the leaves  
not turned down.

When the agitation for the establishment of a public library had its beginning in 1878, Colonel Robert S. Robertson and Colonel David N. Foster drafted and presented a bill to the Indiana General Assembly, providing for the establishment and maintenance of a public library for the citizens of Fort Wayne. The bill at first met defeat but was enacted into law by the legislature of 1881. The first accession book of the Public Library, covering the period 1894-98, lists many volumes donated by Colonel Robertson.

On December 29, 1882, the State Board of Education appointed Colonel Robertson a member of the Board of Trustees of Indiana University as a successor to the late Godlove S. Orth. The Colonel served in that capacity from 1883 to 1894. When the university library was destroyed by fire in 1883, he was chosen chairman of the Library Committee; he secured sixteen thousand volumes for a new collection and assisted in planning a beautiful new library plant.

### VETERAN, FRATERNAL, AND OTHER AFFILIATIONS

After the close of the Civil War, Colonel Robertson was one of the organizers of Post 2 of the Grand Army of the Republic, District of Allen, Department of Indiana. The men who assembled in the Aveline House included Colonel J. O. Martin of Indianapolis, Colonel George Humphrey, Major James S. Gregg, Captain Christopher Hettler, Lieutenant J. H. Ehlers, Lieutenant James C. Woodworth, Lieutenant Colonel Chauncey B. Oakley, Captain Arnold Sauermeister, Lieutenant Henry M. Williams, Colonel Charles Case, Lieutenant John H. Jacobs, Colonel Robert S. Robertson, and Private Gustavus Boltz. This post was later numbered Post 72.

Said Colonel Robertson,

"It died of politics. Bickerings engendered by political strife bore fruit and resulted in dissolving the post without any official action of either the post or the department to declare it moribund or give it funeral rites."<sup>25</sup>

On January 14, 1882, the Sion S. Bass Post No. 40 was organized with the following officers: H. C. Hartman, Post Commander; George Humphrey, S. V. Commander; F. F. Boltz, J. V. Commander; A. T. Lukens, Officer of the Day; R. T. McDonald, Officer of the Guard; Isaac D'Isay, Quartermaster; Allan H. Dougall, Adjutant; and R. S. Robertson, Delegate to the State Encampment at Baltimore. Post membership then was about sixty. The following year the Colonel was appointed delegate from the Grand Council G. A. R. to the National Council at Denver, Colorado.

By 1883 the Sion S. Bass Post had a very large membership. Due to political bickering, one faction broke away from the parent group and formed a new post, called the Anthony Wayne Post. Colonel Robertson was named commander. During 1882-83 he visited many small neighboring towns mustering in men to get new posts started. He was appointed delegate to two national meetings. In 1882 he joined the Ohio Commandery of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion; in 1888 he became a charter member of the Indiana Commandery of that order.

The Colonel became a Free and Accepted Mason in 1862 and advanced in Freemasonry to the thirty-second degree of the Scottish Rite.

Colonel Robertson was an active and participating member of many literary, scientific, and social organizations. He held membership in the Fortnightly Club, the Caledonian Club, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Indiana Historical Society, and the Congress International des Americanistes of Europe. He was also an honorary member of the Societa Lega Filellengia of Turin, Italy. The Colonel served as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Fort Wayne Medical College for 1878.

#### AUTHOR AND SPEAKER

Colonel Robertson was the author of several books on Indiana history and politics, Indiana prehistoric discoveries, and Civil War history. He also contributed historical, archaeological, and literary articles to historical journals, scientific publications, and Hoosier periodicals. A bibliography of his writings appears in the appendix.

The Colonel was a popular and versatile public speaker. During his forty-year residence in Fort Wayne, he usually addressed assemblies of citizens on Memorial Day and the Fourth of July. His favorite speech, "From the Wilderness to Spotsylvania," was frequently delivered before lay church groups, veterans' meetings, and young peoples' societies. The speech was based on his personal reminiscences of that bloody march and en-



Frances Haberly Robertson

gement in which thirty thousand soldiers fell in battle.

The Colonel's broad interests and knowledge are evidenced by the topics of his speeches. His lectures included "Antiquities of Indiana" before the Thalonian Society of the Methodist College, "Defects in our Curriculum" before the Allen County Teachers' Institute, and "Dewey at Manila" at the third annual banquet of the Fortnightly Club in May, 1898.

## LATER YEARS

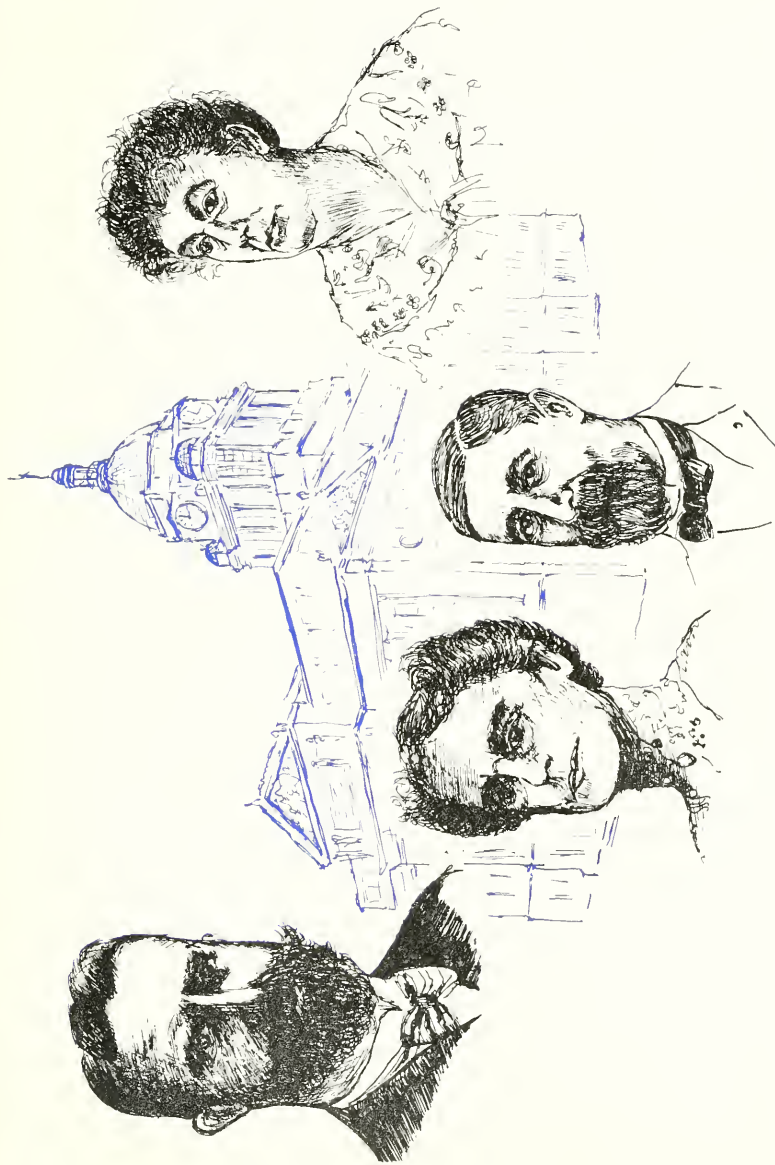
With the passage of the years, many changes had occurred in the Robertson household. After a lengthy illness, Mrs. Elizabeth Robertson had passed away on May 19, 1896. The eldest son, Nicholas, was then practicing law in Eureka, Utah, and had settled permanently in that state. Mabel Robertson had married Ernest F. Lloyd, who was engaged in the gas construction business in Detroit and later in intellectual pursuits at Ann Arbor, Michigan. In 1896 another daughter, Louise, had become the bride of William H. Shambaugh, a rising young Fort Wayne attorney. The young couple had resided for a time with Colonel Robertson and the children who were at home--Robert Strowan and Annie. Colonel Robertson's father, Nicholas, had died at his home in North Argyle, New York, on October 11, 1896, at the ripe old age of ninety-three years.

On January 18, 1898, the FORT WAYNE SENTINEL announced:

. . . the engagement of Mrs. Frances M. Haberly, formerly of Terre Haute, but now of Rochester, New York, and Colonel Robert S. Robertson of Fort Wayne. The marriage will take place next September, immediately upon the return of Mrs. Haberly and her party from their summer tour of Europe.

On August 31, 1898, at the residence of Alex J. Howell in New York City, the couple was married by the Reverend Francis S. Dunham, rector of Christ Church, Albion, New York.

Mrs. Frances Haberly Robertson was a leader in literary



Brentwood S. Tolan

Georgiana Wright Bond

Robert S. Robertson

Frances Haberly Robertson

and artistic circles. She lectured widely in eastern and midwestern cities on mythology, poetry, literature, and art. She traveled extensively and conducted many parties of Americans through the great palaces, cathedrals, galleries, and libraries of Europe. In Fort Wayne she became interested in the recently organized society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, aided in the founding of the local Mary Penrose Wayne Chapter, and served as its first regent.

On March 3, 1900, Colonel and Mrs. Robertson, Mr. and Mrs. James Armstrong, and Mrs. J. W. White sailed aboard the "Kaiser Wilhelm" for Naples, Italy. They traveled on the Continent and in the British Isles, studied in the art galleries, and returned June 4.

The names of Colonel and Mrs. Robertson are closely associated with the planning and dedication of the present Allen County Court House. When the cornerstone was laid on November 17, 1897, Colonel Robertson was one of the speakers; he delineated the history of the Court House. Colonel and Mrs. Robertson, together with Georgiana Bond, had collaborated with the architect, Brentwood S. Tolan, in choosing the inscriptions carved in the stonework. The beautiful structure was dedicated on September 24, 1902, in the presence of a large concourse of people. Colonel Robertson gave the address and commented extensively on the interior and exterior ornamental design.

The citizens of Fort Wayne and Allen County are indebted to the Robertsons for securing Janett's painting of Colonel John Allen, for whom the county was named. They discovered the portrait in Kentucky and persuaded the county government to purchase it for five hundred dollars. At present the picture hangs on the south wall of the west entrance to the Court House.

On September 13, 1900, Colonel Robertson was one of the speakers at the dedication of a small cannon in Lawton Park. General Henry W. Lawton had captured the gun at Talavera during the Philippine Insurrection and had ordered it sent to his old comrades in Fort Wayne.

When the city government decided to erect the equestrian statue of Anthony Wayne in Hayden Park, the Mayor appointed Mrs. Frances Haberly Robertson a member of the committee which determined the details and selection of the model.



## DEATH AND FUNERAL

During the winter of 1905-6, Colonel Robertson suffered an attack of pneumonia, and his condition was critical for a week. His recovery seemed complete, however, and he resumed his law practice in the spring. During its convention in June, the Republican party nominated him as candidate for judge of the circuit court. The Colonel announced that he was hale, hearty, and ready to undertake the arduous duties of a campaign.

The Colonel became ill while his wife was conducting a European tour. Dr. Hiram Van Sweringen and Dr. Alpheus P. Buchman diagnosed the condition as a liver disease. When Mrs. Robertson returned, the Colonel's illness had rapidly progressed. Judge Edward O'Rourke, a close personal friend of the Colonel even though his Democratic opponent for the circuit court judgeship, called frequently at the Robertson home during his friend's last illness. As Colonel Robertson declined, his physicians and family realized that the end was near. In his delirium he believed that he was on the campaign tour; in his conscious moments he talked only of winning as circuit judge. He died in his sleep on Friday, August 24, 1906, at the age of sixty-seven.

On Sunday afternoon the remains lay in state at the Robertson residence, and a throng of people filed slowly past the bier to pay their final respects. The floral tributes were profuse and beautiful. The S. W. Stirk Circle of the Ladies of the G. A. R. held its impressive flag service that afternoon.

During the funeral on Monday, August 27, 1906, the official flag of the Indiana Department of the Loyal Legion, which had been sent from Indianapolis, was draped over the casket. Reverend Frank M. Fox, pastor of the Third Presbyterian Church, conducted the simple service of scriptural readings and prayers at the residence. In addition to the family, the large attendance was composed of Colonel Robertson's professional associates, fraternal brethren, military comrades, close personal friends, and county and city officials. The honorary pallbearers follow: Judge Allen Zollars, Judge Walter Olds, Judge Walpole G. Colerick, Samuel L. Morris, Hugh Stewart, Charles McCulloch, Olaf N. Guldin, and Judge Edward O'Rourke. The active pallbearers, members of the Scottish Rite, were John H. Bass, Dr. Albert E. Bulson, Jr.,

John W. Hayden, George W. McKee, Theodore F. Thieme, John Ferguson, Perry A. Randall, and Sam Foster.

At the conclusion of the obsequies, the funeral procession formed. The military guard of honor included Captain Isaac D'Isay, H. C. McMaken, U. H. Stewart, Cornelius Gearin, Benjamin W. Skelton, and Captain William A. Kelsey. The Court House was closed at three o'clock as a mark of respect to Colonel Robertson's memory, and the county officials attended in a body. Interment followed at Lindenwood Cemetery. Veteran soldiers sounded the solemn notes of "Taps" as the coffin was lowered.

### TRIBUTES OF FRIENDS AND ASSOCIATIONS

Colonel Robertson's many friends and associates sincerely mourned his passing. The newspapers published their full statements; only excerpts are quoted here. Judge Robert S. Taylor, Colonel Robertson's first law partner in Fort Wayne, expressed his sorrow at the death of his old friend and characterized him as follows:

"Colonel Robertson was a delightful sort of man whom we love to call a 'gentleman of the old school.' He was always dignified, polite, and courteous in demeanor but never flippant nor giddy in his manner. At the same time he had a keen sense of humor; he could tell and enjoy stories and could enliven a conversation with keen criticism and repartee of the most enjoyable kind."<sup>26</sup>

Judge O'Rourke wrote the following tribute, which was published in the JOURNAL-GAZETTE:

"I have known Colonel Robertson for over thirty-five years. I was associated with him as a partner in the practice of law. I knew him as a political opponent. In every relationship I found him upright and just. He was a man of deep convictions. He was ambitious to obtain information concerning every subject within the range of human thought. He gave much attention to historical and scientific subjects. He was a good lawyer--a successful prac-

tioner. When presiding as a judge, he was painstaking to reach a correct and just solution of the questions in dispute."<sup>27</sup>

Judge Walpole G. Colerick, a long-time friend, said:

"Colonel Robertson was stately and dignified in appearance, elegant and polished in manners, attractive and fascinating in deportment, and affable and genial in disposition. He was always a gentleman. He was a man of rigid honesty and unswerving integrity. In his relations and affiliations with his professional associates, he was courteous, just and kind, and was always true and faithful in the observance and performance of his promises and engagements. He was learned in history, artistic in his tastes, fond of poetry and anecdotes, and a lover of nature in all forms.

"He was a brave, gallant, and distinguished soldier; he was an able, active, and zealous lawyer; he was a competent, faithful, and incorruptible public officer; and he was always an exemplary citizen. His death is lamented by all who knew him; it has created a vacuum in society which will be difficult to fill."<sup>28</sup>

On August 25, 1906, the Allen County Bar Association met to pay tribute to the memory of the late Colonel Robertson. Prominent members of the legal profession stressed Colonel Robertson's courtesy to the members of the bar. All agreed that he fought his clients' battles to the very last ditch and gave back legal blow for blow. There was always an absence of personalities directed toward his opposing counsel. The Association adopted the following memorial:

Our late member has joined the immortal bar, and his record made in the forty years' membership in our body is complete and filed in the supreme court of the universe. He leaves but four of us who welcomed him to our membership in 1866--Robert S. Taylor, Edward O'Rourke, Walpole G. Colerick, and Allen Zol-lars.

His career at this bar was varied by active political duty as a Republican and was interrupted by government service in Utah as a member of the Board of Registration and Elections for that territory. He filled with honor the offices of city attorney and

lieutenant governor. In the latter he exhibited, for the welfare of the state, that rare quality of courage which declines under provocation the use of force when no good can come of it.

His select, well-used, and extensive library and reliquary collection, as well as his valuable contributions to historical publications, evidence to the public, as his friends learned from personal intercourse, that our departed brother was a wellspring of valuable learning and general information.

His detailed knowledge of the local history of this country, the Maumee Valley, and his general information was strikingly illustrated in his address at the dedication of our Court House.

As a soldier and officer, he was taught one of life's great lessons--sincere respect and chivalrous courtesy are the due of a brave and honest foeman. While in our ranks he was a hard, aggressive fighter; the lesson was not forgotten, and no legal opponent ever charged him with unprofessional conduct, nor did he ever exhibit bitterness or personal discourtesy in his professional contests.

His comrades of the Grand Army and Loyal Legion, his associates of the various Masonic bodies, his friends in general, as ourselves, will miss him. While we sorrow with his bereaved wife and children, we feel that they, as well as we, may rest on his record and trust in a favorable judgment from the Great Tribunal.

Samuel R. Alden,  
James B. Harper,  
Walpole G. Colerick,  
Samuel L. Morris,  
Owen N. Heaton,  
Allen Zollars,  
Committee.<sup>29</sup>

The members of the Blackford Law Club held a meeting on the same day in the Superior Court Chamber and adopted the following:

The members of the Blackford Law Club respectfully assemble in memory of Colonel Robert S. Robertson to express their admiration of his many high qualities of character and to extend

to the bereaved family their sincere sympathy.

To memorialize and to further show our appreciation of his kindly helpfulness and wise counsel when he honored the members of the club by his presence at their meetings, we respectfully spread a copy of this memorial on the records of the club and transmit a copy to the bereaved family.

D. Burns Douglass,  
Martin H. Luecke,  
Wilbur G. Carpenter,  
William Fruechtenicht,  
Guy Colerick,  
Committee.<sup>30</sup>



## NOTES

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2. FORT WAYNE DAILY NEWS, August 25, 1906.
3. Robert S. Robertson War Diary, May 12, 1864.
4. C. E. Slocum and R. S. Robertson, eds., HISTORY OF THE MAUMEE RIVER BASIN (n. p.: Bowen and Slocum, n. d.), Vol. III, p. 21.
5. FORT WAYNE JOURNAL, September 4, 1886.
6. INDIANAPOLIS NEWS, January 17, 1887.
7. Ibid., February 24, 1887.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., October 10, 1893.
10. FORT WAYNE SENTINEL, March 16, 1887.
11. FORT WAYNE JOURNAL, August 1, 1888.
12. INDIANAPOLIS NEWS, July 27, 1888.
13. FORT WAYNE SENTINEL, August 6, 1888.
14. FORT WAYNE JOURNAL, October 14, 1886.
15. INDIANAPOLIS NEWS, August 6, 1888.
16. FORT WAYNE SENTINEL, December 12, 1888.
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18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
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