

Contributed by,
James Sheldon, Jr.,
No 69 Canal Street,
New York City.

F 129
.B8 F7
Copy 1

OLIVER FORWARD.



THE
LIFE AND PUBLIC SERVICES
OF
OLIVER FORWARD

READ BEFORE THE BUFFALO HISTORICAL SOCIETY,
JANUARY 25, 1875.

BY
HON. JAMES SHELDON,
President.

BUFFALO:
PRESS OF WARREN, JOHNSON & CO.
1875.

J. Sheldon Jr.

21

OLIVER FORWARD.

The Buffalo Historical Society, in the prosecution of its work of gathering all the facts having relation to the early history of our city and generally to the region of Western New York and the great lakes, have directed a memorial of the life and public services of Oliver Forward to be compiled, not only that their record may exist in some authentic form, but as a just recognition of his valuable labors. The lives of men who have rendered important services to their generation and by their devotion to the public good have aided to accomplish beneficial results should be borne in grateful and enduring remembrance. Too often the applause of men is given, with unsparing hand, to those who were incited to action, solely by selfish considerations and withheld from more deserving objects of approbation, whose highest ambition was to advance the interests of their age. It is the duty of the impartial historian to render to each the proper meed of honor, and if time and circumstance have contributed to induce forgetfulness of merit, it well becomes us to review the records of the past and award the just measure of our commendation.

Samuel Forward, the great-grand-father of the object of this memoir, emigrated from England before the year 1700, and with his wife settled at Windsor, Ct. They brought with them those stern virtues and characteristics of their parent land which enabled them, with the men of their time to triumph over the troubles and hardships endured in the settlement of the wilderness, and which, in the long line of their descendants, have been, upon many occasions, so greatly manifested. Their son Abel, was born in 1740, and died at East Granby, Ct., in 1798, leaving a large family of children, of whom Samuel, who was the sixth child, was born May 1st, 1752, and settled at East Granby, where he resided until June, 1803. At this time he sold his possessions at that place and emigrated to Aurora, in the state of Ohio. He went overland with all his family, consisting of himself, his wife, his son Samuel with his wife and children; his other children, Walter, Julia, Chamcey, Rensselaer, his son Oliver's wife and David Loomis, conveyed in two large wagons, one drawn by a span of horses, the other by two yoke of oxen and a horse in the lead, one saddle horse and two cows. Thus the train was made up and with them they took farming utensils, domestic articles and provisions. They reached Aurora July 27, 1803, having been forty-eight days on the route which is now traveled in half as many hours, and found his son Oliver there, and three hired men, who had gone there the previous February to prepare for them. A

clearing had been made and a log house erected, and the pioneer, with his family around him, began the great work of aiding in the development of the mighty west. Such men, the inheritors of sterling and manly New England virtues, were the very ones to plant the graces of our civilization and the republicanism of our institutions upon the virgin soil of the north-western territory. He died in 1821, having filled many positions of importance, among them, that of judge of Portage county; his counsel always being influential and his character entitling him to universal respect.

Oliver Forward was born in December, 1780, and married Sally Granger of Sutfield, Conn. He settled at Aurora, Ohio, in the spring of 1803, and resided there probably about six years and then through the influence of his brother-in-law, Erastus Granger of Buffalo, he moved to this place about the year 1809. Judge Granger at that time filled the position of post-master and collector of customs at Buffalo, and agent for the Indian tribes in western New York. He had before that settled here, and took up a large tract of land, now, in part, embraced in Forest Lawn and the Park, and resided until his death, at what was known as Flint Hill, a little west of the stone house erected in latter years by his son, our esteemed fellow-citizen, Warren Granger. Judge Forward immediately assumed the duties of deputy collector and assistant post-master, which were of much importance, as this place was the great distributing office of the frontier. He was also appointed and acted as justice of the peace.

In 1811, Charles Townsend and George Coit, honorable names in the history of our city, came here as traders, bringing about twenty tons of merchandise—a heavy stock for that time—which was boated from Schenectady on the Mohawk river, carried across the short Portage to Wood creek and thence floated to Oswego and to Lewiston, carted around the Falls to Schlosser, and thence brought in boats up the Niagara river to Buffalo. Judge Townsend furnished a paper before his death, from which the following facts in regard to the village at that early day are extracted. "In 1811, Buffalo contained less than one hundred dwellings and a population of some four or five hundred. The only public buildings were the old stone jail on Washington street and an unfinished wooden court house. A small wooden building, built and claimed by Doctor Cyrenius Chapin, near the southwest corner of Pearl and Swan streets, put up for a school-house, served also as a town hall, a church for all religious denominations, and indeed for all public purposes. Three taverns were kept, one by Joseph Landon, on Exchange street

and occupying a part of the site of the Mansion House; another of more moderate pretensions at the corner of Main and Seneca streets, by Raphael Cook, and the third by Gamaliel St. John, near the corner of Main and Court streets. The only merchants were Juba Storrs & Co., Grosvenor & Heacock, Eli Hart and Isaac Davis; the first being located on the northwest corner of Washington and Exchange streets, and the others on Main, between South Division and Exchange streets. A mail from Albany, brought once or twice a week in a wooden spring lumber wagon, was opened by Oliver Forward, a justice of the peace. Judge Granger held the office of postmaster, and also that of collector of the port; the latter an office rather of honor than of business or profit. The commerce of the lakes was small. I think (says Judge Townsend) there were only four or five small vessels on our side, and two or three merchantmen, besides two British armed vessels on the other. There was no harbor here. The mouth of the Buffalo creek was usually so much obstructed by a sand-bar that small vessels could but rarely enter, and even canoes were sometimes shut out, and footmen walked dry shod across the mouth. Vessels were loaded and unloaded at a wharf near Bird Island, at Black Rock.*

Before 1814 Judge Forward had built a small one-story wooden dwelling on Pearl street, in the rear of what is now No. 102, where he resided, and in a small addition thereto carried on the post-office and the business of collector of customs as the deputy of Judge Granger. This was the central part of the village, where the news from all parts of the world was received and disseminated. He continued thus to act and live until the British and Indians, on the 30th day of December, 1813, burned the place and massacred the defenseless women and children. The post-office was removed to Judge Granger's residence where the public business was transacted until the following spring, when it became safe for the scattered inhabitants to return to the village. As soon as possible in the year 1814 Judge Forward commenced the erection of a new dwelling on Pearl street. It was a double two-story brick house, and was considered the most elegant residence in the place. The northern portion of it is yet standing, being the parlor of the house No. 102 Pearl street, the hall of which is of comparatively recent erection. In this part of his residence the post-office was established and, as Judge Granger had before this resigned the position of collector, to which Judge Forward succeeded, the business of collector of customs was also transacted there. For many years he was also the treasurer of Niagara county, before Erie county was organized, and in the performance of the duties of these positions of trust he manifested the greatest integrity.

The village of Buffalo was incorporated by the legislature in April, 1813, and Eli Hart, Zenas W. Barker, Ebenezer Wadden, Oliver Forward and Cyrenus Chapin were the trustees nominated by the act. On the 14th of April, 1817, he was appointed one of the judges of Niagara county, which position he held many years. The original commission, in my possession, appoints Oliver Forward, Charles Townsend, Samuel Wilkinson, Gideon Frisby and

Samuel Russel judges of the county of Niagara, and among the justices for the territory of what is now Erie county appear the names of James Cronk, afterwards sheriff, Joshua Henshaw and Jonathan Bowen, of Willink; Seth Abbott and Silas Patrick, of Hamburg; Amos Smith and John Hill, of Eden; Frederick Richmond, of Concord; James Sheldon, Ezra St. John and Alexander Hitchcock, of Buffalo, and Otis R. Hopkins, of Clarence, men who were prominently identified with the early history of our county.

For many years Judge Forward was a director of the Bank of Niagara, and at one time was called upon by all interested in the bank to take the position of Cashier, which he accepted, the expectation being that his name and influence might in some way retrieve the fortunes of that institution.

Early in 1817, Judge Forward, then being collector of the port, was authorized by the treasury department to purchase a site for a light house, and after some negotiations with Joseph Ellicott, the agent of the Holland Land Company, selected the point where the residence of the light-house keeper now stands, that being at the time, as stated in the correspondence, near the outlet of Buffalo creek. The price paid was \$350, which was advanced by him in order to hasten the negotiation, and contracts were let for the building of the light-house and an adjacent building for the residence of the keeper. His letter of December 26, 1818, to the department, states that in obedience to directions received by him, he had notified Mr. John E. Skaats of his appointment as keeper, and that in pursuance thereof he had taken charge of it without a moment's delay. He also adds that the light-house and building were completed on the first of the preceding November, and as a light was at that time an important aid in navigating the lake, he had employed Mr. George W. Fox to take charge until a keeper was appointed. These incidents are only mentioned as being matters of local history, of sufficient moment to be recorded.

The project of a grand canal to unite the waters of Lake Erie with those of the Hudson river at Albany, began in those years to receive universal attention. The citizens of Buffalo, at an early day, appreciated the importance of their village with reference to its being the proper and natural western terminus of the canal. Naturally enough, they looked forward with solicitude to the accomplishment of this event, which would render this place the emporium of the west. After the determination of the state authorities that the canal should be constructed, and which was not arrived at until after a struggle, great and powerful influences, not only in the canal board, but of some of the most distinguished politicians on the frontier, were at work to locate the termination at Black Rock. That seemed to be the place designed by nature, being the very outlet of the lakes and so situated upon the Niagara river that a safe and commodious harbor, when reached, was provided for all the commerce that could ever float upon our inland seas. This view was taken by many disinterested persons in authority and strongly urged by Peter B. Porter and others who had made large investments at Black Rock and whose political influ-

ence was commanding. The only way the argument could be met was by actual demonstration that a harbor, easier of access and equally commodious could be created at Buffalo. It must be remembered that the mouth of Buffalo creek was generally closed by a bar of sand and vessels never entered but received and discharged their cargoes from lighters. Few believed that any means could be devised whereby an entrance could be created which could be relied upon for durability, and if this was so, no reasonable hope could be entertained that the canal would be extended to this point. The history of that crisis, in which the subject of our memoir was so conspicuous an actor, has been told in the sketches furnished by Judge Wilkinson to the Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser*, the main features of which will more faithfully relate it than the effort of any one now living.

In April, 1818, at the instance of the citizens of Buffalo, an act of the legislature was passed authorizing the survey of the creek at the expense of the county of Niagara, which then embraced it, with reference to determining the feasibility of constructing a harbor, and William Peacock made the survey in the following summer, gratuitously. Although the report was favorable, neither the general government nor the state would assume the work. But the latter, in 1819, by law agreed to loan \$12,000 for its construction on being secured by bond and mortgage for its repayment.

Oliver Forward, Charles Townsend, George Coit and Samuel Wilkeson gave the requisite security in the fore part of 1820, and the pier was forthwith commenced. It was prosecuted and finished under the supervision of Judge Wilkeson in 1821, in 221 working days, and extended into the lake for about eighty rods into twelve foot water. Every person in the place seems to have been agitated by, and to have participated in the projected improvement, and it was carried forward earnestly and with that rare determination which bends to no adverse circumstances and always wins success or glory. Discouragements clustered around them in vain. It seems marvellous that such an undertaking was persevered in amid the jeers of neighbors and the bullets of adversity by the people of an inconsiderable town, who were not aided by experience, nor stimulated by the eye of general observation. The narrative is worthy of DeFoe. The make-shifts and substitutes for the unattainable machinery they needed were most ingenious. And though they encountered gravel where sand only was supposed to be, and storms often jeopardized and sometimes nearly destroyed their labors, they were not to be deterred. And when all seemed successfully completed, the first steamboat of the lakes, the *Walk-in-the-water*, having been lost, and her owners having determined to build the second,—the old *Superior*,—the building of it was nearly secured to Black Rock and lost to Buffalo, and was gained for the latter only by the giving of a stringent judgment bond by nearly all its responsible citizens, conditioned to pay to the steamboat company one hundred and fifty dollars for every day's detention of the boat in the creek after the 1st of May, by harbor obstruction. The boat was built in our creek in 1822, and ready to enter

the lake in the spring of 1823. The completion of the harbor, such as it was, had given force to the general considerations in favor of continuing the canal to Buffalo, and the decision of the canal board to that effect was published in the report of 1823, to the great joy of its care-worn and anxious inhabitants. But their joy was damped and they were suddenly summoned to a renewal of their labors. The spring freshet, which was to perfect the harbor entrance by expelling all obstructions and so give egress to the *Superior*, encountered a huge body of anchored ice and being repelled by it, formed an eddy and whirled large beds of sand and gravel into the channel, reducing its depth to three feet and a half for a full hundred yards. And yet, on the first day of May, the voluntary subscriptions and exertions of the citizens had reopened it, and the *Superior* floated through into the lake; the bond was cancelled, and the title of Buffalo to consideration as the future great city of the lakes was first established.

Before this was accomplished it was evident that some master mind must be selected to represent our village in the councils of the state at Albany, and in 1819 Oliver Forward was elected to the assembly as a delegate from the district containing Chautauque, Cattaraugus and Niagara counties, in which latter Erie county was then embraced. He entered the house at a period of great political excitement. The project of the Erie canal was not then fully determined and was opposed by the elements then arrayed with such bitter hostility to De Witt Clinton, the friend and champion of the measure, Judge Forward, as was expected, sustained the canal policy with great zeal and influence and with that effective and patient policy which was characteristic of his nature. He was the compeer of great men in that remarkable session. John C. Spencer was speaker and such men as Elisha Williams, of Hudson; Peter Schuyler, of Albany; Erastus Root, of Delaware; Abraham Boeckes and Thomas J. Oakley, of Dutchess; Nathaniel Merriam, of Lewis; Jonas Earl, Jr., of Onondaga, and John A. King, of Queens, renowned as statesmen and orators and jurists, exercised commanding influence. Not only in the legislature was Judge Forward enabled to sustain the canal policy with success, but he labored with the officers of state and with all men whose support was of moment. His correspondence reached all quarters, freighted with arguments and persuasions, such as a man of superior intellect and a judicial turn of mind could adduce in favor of the great work, and his record was of such a character that his constituents determined to retain him at Albany, and he was elected senator in the spring of 1820. Then came the session of the senate in the fall of 1820 and the sessions of 1821 and 1822, during which he maintained a conspicuous position and faithfully accomplished the great objects of his mission. It is not too much to say of his course in the state legislature, that upon every occasion he was found to be the warm supporter of all measures that appeared to be for the general public good and which promoted the cause of morality and education and the interests of the industrial classes. More effectual as a writer than as a debater, his sound

judgment and the power of urging his opinions made his counsels influential, and his great integrity prevailed where more brilliant men would have met with disappointment.

The canal board in 1823 finally decided upon continuing the canal to Buffalo, and when the harbor was completed in May of that year as before related, the great work of fixing the destiny of this city was accomplished. It is useless to speak of our obligations to such men as Forward and Wilkeson, and Townsend, and Coit, and the other of our citizens who labored incessantly, and at the peril of all their property, to ensure that result. We acknowledge them with gratitude, and though the tale of their patient labors and untiring efforts may be thrice told, we should never weary in the recital.

At the close of the session of 1822, on his return to Buffalo, Judge Forward was again elected chairman of the board of trustees of the village, as a mark of confidence and respect, in which position he continued to exercise his watchful care over the growing interests of the place. He was re-elected a trustee of the village at the annual elections in 1823 and 1824 and chosen chairman of the board, that being the highest position his fellow-citizens could confer upon him.

The contract for constructing the section of the canal from Little Buffalo creek to Black Rock having been entered into and preparations made for actually commencing the work, the occasion was deemed by the citizens here to be of so much moment that it was resolved it should be celebrated by proper formalities.

Friday, the 9th day of August, 1822, was the day appointed by the contractors to commence their labors and on that day the citizens of our village and of the adjacent country united in the very interesting ceremonies so appropriate to the occasion. They assembled at the Eagle tavern about nine o'clock and marched in handsome order through the village, preceded by martial music, to the place where the canal was to terminate and first to receive into its bosom the waters of Lake Erie. This point was where the Commercial street bridge now stands. Here the national flag was hoisted and a cannon planted upon an eminence at a little distance from the interesting spot.

When order had been restored the Rev. Mr. Squires, the Presbyterian clergyman of the place, addressed the Throne of Grace in a prayer peculiarly appropriate, after which the Rev. Mr. Galusha in a short but neat and animated speech referred to the importance of the work then to be inaugurated, and predicted great results therefrom. Then the ceremony of breaking ground was performed by several of the oldest citizens of the place. Judge Forward, as the chairman of the board of trustees and the representative of the village, planted the first spade in the earth and raised the first soil, and then Colonel Chapin, Judge Barker and Judge Walden joined, after which all the principal citizens and many respectable strangers with plows and spades united in the commencement of the grand canal. The procession then moved down the line of the canal about half a mile, where the citizens partook of the hospitality of the contractors, and then returning finally dispersed amid resounding

cheers. A contemporary writer says that on this interesting occasion all were united in the same interest, the same feeling, the same sentiment. Clintonians and Bucktails, the Kremlin aristocracy and those opposed, democrats and federalists, all joined hands and exchanged fraternal congratulations. Political feuds and animosities were lost in the grandeur of the scene, and nothing was heard but one universal expression of heartfelt approbation.

In the fall of the year 1825, the canal was fully completed, and it only remained to dedicate it to the world by ceremonies suitable to the occasion. Committees of conference on the part of New York and Albany taking the lead, a general plan of celebration was agreed upon and concurred in by a conference of committees of Rochester, Lockport and Buffalo. An important feature in the general arrangements for the celebration was the stationing of cannon from Buffalo to Sandy Hook to announce the departure of the first boat from Lake Erie to tide water, and answer the purpose of a continuous salute. On the evening of the 25th of October, 1825, the entire canal from Buffalo to Albany was in a navigable condition. Buffalo, then a village of only twenty-five hundred inhabitants, from its position at the head of navigation, was, of course, to lead off in the ceremonies, and well did the germ of a now great city acquit itself. The New York committee that arrived here on the evening of the 25th, stated in their report that they found everything in readiness for the commencement of the celebration. At nine o'clock on the morning of the 26th of October, a procession was formed in front of the court house. It consisted of the governor and lieutenant-governor of the state, the New York delegation, delegations from villages along the whole line of the canal, various societies of mechanics with appropriate banners and citizens generally; the whole escorted by the Buffalo Band and Capt. Rathbun's rifle company. The procession moved down Main street to the head of the canal where the pioneer boat, the *Seneca Chief*, was in waiting. The governor and lieutenant-governor, and the committees, including that of Buffalo, were received on board. The whole, standing upon the deck, there were mutual introductions and congratulations. Jesse Hawley, in behalf of the Rochester committee, made a short address which was properly replied to by Judge Forward on behalf of the authorities and citizens of Buffalo. All things being in readiness, the signal gun was fired and continuing from gun to gun, in succession, in one hour and twenty minutes the citizens of New York were apprized that a boat was departing from the foot of Lake Erie, and was on its way, traversing a new path to the Atlantic ocean. The *Seneca Chief* led off in fine style drawn by four gray horses, fancifully caparisoned. Three boats, the *Perry*, *Superior* and *Buffalo* followed, and the fleet moved from the dock under a salute from the rifle company, accompanied by music from the band. The procession then moved to the court house where an address was delivered by Sheldon Smith, Esq., and a public dinner succeeded; the festivities of the day being closed by a splendid ball at the Eagle Tavern.

The correspondence of Judge Forward with Governor Clinton and other distinguished men

of our state, from 1818 to 1826, in regard to the canal policy and also as to its termination here and as to our harbor, and the letters to him in answer, have in part been preserved, and show that he was constantly urging the fair consideration of the claims of our village and setting forth all the arguments and facts that could be adduced in support of those measures. At this day, surrounded with all the evidences of wealth and civilization, one rises from the perusal of such papers almost with a doubt that it could be possible that but little more than fifty years ago the great men of the time were fearful lest the work would never be accomplished. It seems more like some fairy tale than a reality, and illustrates on every page the patriotism and devotion of those who so successfully carried the measure to a conclusion. In all this correspondence it appears that Governor Clinton was at all times friendly to the interests of Buffalo as against Black Rock, believing that this point was in every way better adapted to be the emporium of the lakes, and as one of the canal board lent his powerful influence in support of the claims of our citizens.

These relations of the history of the Erie Canal have been given for the reason that the life and labors of Oliver Forward were for so many years directed to the accomplishment of that great work. How earnestly and with what self-denial he devoted his services to that end; how patiently but firmly he encountered the determined opposition of rival and powerful interests, with arguments and persuasions in place of invectives; with what statesman-like abilities he made use of political power are matters that have almost been forgotten in our generation.

But when cotemporaneous history is examined, and the public journals of the time, and private papers and correspondence consulted, it will be found that he was one of the most active and influential men of his day, and contributed as much as any other to the success of measures which laid the foundation of the opulence and splendor of our city.

In the year 1825, it will be remembered that General Lafayette visited this country, and was received as the nation's guest with the most distinguished consideration. He arrived at this place, from the west, on the steamboat *Superior* on the 4th day of June, 1825, and as Judge Forward was the one who addressed him on behalf of our citizens, it is proper to recall this item of local history by giving the account published in a paper of that time.

“General Lafayette arrived in this village on Saturday, about two o'clock in the afternoon, and was immediately escorted to the Eagle Tavern by a detachment of Capt. Vosburgh's company of cavalry, and the Frontier guards under Capt. Rathbun. He was preceded by the committee of arrangements and his suite. On his arrival he was conducted with his suite, by the committee, to an elegant pavillion erected in front of the house, where he was met by the corporation, in whose behalf and that of the citizens of the village Oliver Forward, Esq., addressed him as follows:

“GENERAL—In behalf of the citizens of this village and its vicinity, I have the honor of welcoming you among them, and of tendering

you that regard which has been again and again reiterated from the centre to the remotest extremities of the Union. This regard we are unable to testify to you amidst the splendor and magnificence of a state or national emporium; but to you, we are aware, it will not be less acceptable if presented in the unimposing forms of republican simplicity. We are not less mindful than are the whole people of this extended empire, of the services you have rendered our common country, nor less conscious of the gratification the patriot and the philanthropist must feel in passing the declivities of life, carrying with him the richest of all earthly reward, a nation's gratitude. But few of us were among those who participated with you in the toils and the dangers of the revolution which established not only the liberties of the confederacy, but what the world had never before seen, a welcome, a happy and a protected home for the oppressed of all nations. But we alike revere the memory of the brave and cherish with the same zeal, the principles for which you and our fathers bled; and with all the grateful recollections which a love of liberty can inspire, of the voluntary sacrifices you have made in the support of her cause, we beg you to accept the humble tribute of our respect, in conjunction with what has been and will continue to be proffered, not only by every citizen of the American nation, but by every friend of liberty and of mankind.”

It may well be questioned whether a more dignified and happy address was presented to La Fayette during his sojourn in this country.

The narrative further states that a suitable reply to Judge Forward was made, and at five o'clock the general and company sat down to an excellent dinner, provided by Mr. Rathbun, and the evening was spent pleasantly and the village handsomely illuminated.

The last public services of Judge Forward were rendered at the solicitation of the citizens of Buffalo, in connection with a revision of the charter. The city was organized in the spring of 1832, but it was soon evident that in order to accomplish the purposes intended of subserving the public interest, an extension of many of the powers granted was needed. On behalf of the citizens generally a committee of fifteen was appointed at a meeting called to consider the matters in question of whom Judge Forward was one as a representative from the first ward and the common council added five adherents to the committee. He was elected chairman by common consent and the labors of the committee were extended through the year. During this time, many important provisions were originated and many revised and improved, and a foundation laid for a charter that gave ample power to preserve public order, regulate and improve the highways and establish our common schools. The last named subject was one that greatly interested Judge Forward. One of his papers refers particularly to this matter and a few extracts from it may well be presented as an illustration of the vigor and terseness of his style, at the same time illustrating with what thoughtfulness and ability he considered questions of public moment. He says:

“At the request of intelligent and respectable citizens, I have prepared a series of num-

bers addressed to the mayor and common council of the city of Buffalo, upon the subject of various improvements in said city and also upon the subject of powers granted by the charter, which by construction may be made too extensive and are consequently too unguarded and indefinite in their character. In addition to this I have taken a brief view of powers which should be granted by a legislative act to more effectually preserve public order and to make more extensive, permanent and accommodating provisions for the support of common schools. That our city charter may be beneficially improved by salutary additions and improvements, there can be no doubt in the mind of any intelligent man who will take upon himself the trouble of carefully examining its provisions, and after a full consideration of the subject I have no doubt that, without adding to the public burdens, a city fund may be provided for the education of the poor in common schools which should be under the control of the city authorities. I cannot forbear remarking that the subject of common schools is one of vital importance to the interests of the whole community. In them, the children of the poor are educated—indeed they are general sources of early instruction, and upon them will depend in a great measure the morals and the intelligence of each succeeding generation."

But the time had almost come when the labors of Oliver Forward were to cease. In the summer of 1832 he suffered from an attack of cholera, and never recovered his physical strength, but gradually failed until he died in April 1833, thus closing a life which had been almost entirely devoted to the public service.

Mrs. Forward died in December, 1831, and of several children one only is now living—Mrs. Julia M. Sterling—who married Mr. Ambrose S. Sterling, a former merchant of this city. Several of the brothers of Judge Forward have been distinguished in our national councils. Walter Forward, of Pittsburg, was well known as one of the first lawyers of his state, and served his constituents as a representative in congress in 1822. In 1837 he bore a prominent part in the Pennsylvania convention to reform the state constitution. In March, 1841, President Harrison named him first comptroller of the treasury, which post he held until he was appointed secretary of the treasury by President Tyler. On retiring from that position he resumed his practice at the bar until appointed by President Taylor as minister to Denmark, and on his return home was made president judge of the district court, which office he held at the time of his death in 1852.

Chauncey Forward was born Feb. 4, 1793 and went to Pittsburg about 1809 with his brother Walter where he was educated and became a lawyer and settled at Somerset, Pa. He

was a member of the state legislature and also of congress for three terms from 1825 to 1831. One of his daughters married Hon. Jeremiah S. Black, who was the attorney-general during the administration of President Buchanan. Russell and Dryden, two younger brothers, were educated for the bar, and gave great promise of future excellence, but untimely deaths prevented the realization of the high hopes entertained by their friends.

In preparing this memorial, use has been made of the contemporary newspapers, which are generally reliable in their statements of facts, and of Turner's history of the Holland purchase, as well as a remarkably well-written paper compiled by the lamented Guy H. Salisbury contained in the directory of 1847. Particular obligation is due to Rev. James Remington of Lancaster, in this county, the father of our county clerk, who was the brother-in-law of Judge Forward and intimately associated with him from about the year 1811, for many years in the discharge of the duties of the public offices held by him, and who has furnished many particulars of which no record existed.

In person, Judge Forward was of medium stature but portly, of grave and dignified presence, one whose imposing appearance would have been marked in any assembly of men. His mind was judicial in its tone and character; always calm and temperate, dealing with facts and seeking by logical methods to convince others; modest as to self-assertion, but firm and resolute in seeking the ends and purposes he knew were right and justifiable. Above all he had that mastery of those with whom he became associated, which compelled acquiescence in his opinions, and the gift of wisely marshaling the abilities of others who joined with him in the prosecution of important purposes. He guided the energies of one and availed himself of the acquirements of another; the learning of one and the influence of another were made to contribute to success, while all looked to him for wise and prudent counsel.

The life of Oliver Forward is but another illustration of the fact that it is to circumstances beyond his control more than to his own works that a man is generally indebted for his position and for the character of the memories that survive him. Had he laid the foundation of a fortune in this city, and died, surrounded by a large circle of descendants and relatives who now worthily represented his name and wealth, how much a larger place in public remembrance would he have filled. Let us not withhold the due tributes of respect and gratitude. Rather let us, by the memorial of his life, preserve the just record of his fame, so that his name and acts and deeds, so indissolubly connected with our welfare and prosperity, may continue to be the objects of public regard.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 220 685 7