

**MARTIN VAN BUREN
TO THE END OF HIS
PUBLIC CAREER**

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Martin Van Buren to the end of his public career by George Bancroft

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GEORGE BANCROFT

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BY
GEORGE BANCROFT

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PREFACE.

MANY years ago Silas Wright, then United States Senator from the State of New York, requested me to write a life of Martin Van Buren. I answered that I did not possess adequate materials for the undertaking. At a later day he brought me a singularly complete collection of manuscripts, including letters and papers extending to the end of Van Buren's public career. From these and other sources I prepared a concise record of the events of his life. The manuscript was seen by Van Buren, who pronounced it, as a record of facts relating to himself, authentic and true.

At the time of its preparation the public mind was grievously agitated by party divisions on public affairs and on public men; the manuscript was, therefore, put aside for publication in times more favorable to a fairness of judgment on the

character and career of Van Buren. In my recent revision of the original manuscript I have made no change that could affect Van Buren's approval of it as thoroughly correct.

September 2, 1889.

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LIFE OF MARTIN VAN BUREN.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY LIFE OF MARTIN VAN BUREN:

1782-1812.

PUBLIC life in America opens the widest avenue for the promulgation of truth. The millions, through the statesmen of their choice, give utterance to their aspirations, and write the ripened results of their experience and reflection in the statute book of the country. No career is more honorable than that of the man who, alike in private life and in public station, consistently and earnestly cherishes the principles and promotes the measures which advance the culture and power of the people. Such services, in the State of New York,

have most frequently sprung from the homes of the smaller freeholders. The proprietors, whose manorial estates had enjoyed the right of representation, declared for American independence; and one of them, Robert R. Livingston, drafted the resolutions by which the American Congress proclaimed its adhesion to what Washington called "the modern" code of maritime law; but the principles of our Revolution would not have been safe in the custody of landlords alone; and, happily, by the side of their vast estates lay the more numerous small freeholds, on which the plough was in the hands of the owner.

At one of these freeholds in Kinderhook, on the fifth day of December, 1782, just as the American war for independence was drawing to a close, Martin Van Buren first saw the light. His mother, who lived to see her son on the sure path to distinction, was a woman of exemplary piety; his father was a descendant of one of the