

**ELIJAH WARD OF NEW
YORK: A
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

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Elijah Ward of New York: A Biographical Sketch by Robert Hadfield

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ROBERT HADFIELD

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[OF NEW YORK]

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BY

ROBERT HADFIELD.

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TO THE
CONSTITUENTS
OF THE
HON. ELIJAH WARD, M. C.,
EIGHTH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT, NEW YORK,

*THIS SKETCH
OF HIS PUBLIC SERVICES IS RESPECTFULLY
DEDICATED.*

ELIJAH WARD.

HE name of Ward is of Scandinavian origin, and passed with the Northmen to Normandy. Two of the principal chiefs, "de la Warde," and "Wardc," accompanied William the Conqueror into England, and were engaged in the Battle of Hastings.

The Honorable Andrew Ward, from whom the Wards of Westchester County, in the State of New York are descended, migrated from Suffolk, in England, to New England, in 1630, in company with a number of families of that county, including that of Mr. (afterwards Governor) Winthrop. He first settled at Watertown, Massachusetts, where, five years afterwards, he, with others, was appointed by the General Court to form a government in Connecticut. In the following year, he and his associates held the first court; and "he made the first law, and tried the first cause in it." He was for several years a judge or magistrate, and, at different periods, a deputy or member of both branches of the General Court of that colony: The historian of Connecticut, referring to him and his colleagues, says: "They were the civil and religious fathers of the colony, who assisted in forming its free and happy constitution; were among its legislators, and some of the chief pillars of the church and commonwealth, who, with many others of the same excellent character, employed their abilities and their estates, for the prosperity of the colony."

In 1641, differences of opinion arose on certain questions of civil and religious liberty, and the views of Mr. Ward, as to its value, be-

ing more consistent than those of the constituted authorities of the day, he, with several of his friends, removed to Stamford, and, in 1643, purchased the town of Hempstead, L. I., then a part of the colony of New Amsterdam. The following year they formally landed at Hempstead Harbor, now Roslyn, L. I., and founded the village of Hempstead; but, having some difficulty with the Dutch authorities, Mr. Ward returned to Connecticut, was appointed a magistrate, and closed a long and useful life in 1659.

Some of his children removed to Westchester County, and to them the Wards of that region owe their origin. The name is one of the most distinguished in the annals of the county, and many members of the family have held prominent positions in the state and nation.

Elijah Ward was born at Sing Sing, Westchester County, and is about fifty-six years of age. He is the son of Israel Ward, now deceased, who married a daughter of the late John Rossel, of the same county. Young Ward was sent to the village academy, where he received an academic education, and at an early age developed a taste for books and the acquisition of knowledge. He was interested in many subjects; but, political economy, history, and biography, were his favorites, more especially the latter, wherein youth can trace the progressive steps by which men attain high public, political and social eminence; and, if ambitious, may learn to follow successful and illustrious examples. His industry and perseverance in self-culture, gave him, in addition to the results of his academic studies, a large fund of general information of much use to him in after life. Having an early predilection for the legal profession, he decided upon adopting it. His kinsman, Major General Aaron Ward, then a representative in congress, and a leading member of the bar in Westchester County, proposed taking him into his office. The offer was peculiarly favorable, and was warmly appreciated; but, with the spirit of self-reliance which has been the main spring of his success, young Ward resolved that, as such a step

would make him somewhat dependent, he would rely upon his own efforts, until he should thus be enabled to pursue his intended studies.

In the spring of 1833, he went to the city of New York to seek employment. On the day after his arrival, he was engaged by Mr. John S. McKibben, then a prominent and much respected merchant, with whom he remained up to the time when he was enabled to direct his attention exclusively to his chosen profession.

Meanwhile he became thoroughly conversant with business transactions, thus acquiring knowledge which was afterwards of great value to him in the practice of the law, and developing the deep interest in mercantile affairs and men, which has always been an animating principle of his public life. So long as he was with Mr. McKibben, he devoted his time, after the hours of business, to mental improvement. Under competent instructors he unremittingly pursued a course of classical, philosophical and practical studies; thus laying the foundation of much that was useful and characteristic in his future successful career. He kept steadily in mind the profession he had marked out for himself,—and, in 1838, while yet a clerk, attended the Law School in the University of New York, then numbering among its professors the Honorable William Kent, the Honorable Benjamin F. Butler, and David Graham.

In January, 1839, Mr. Ward was elected President of the "Mercantile Library Association," an institution then, as now, contributing much to the advancement of the intellectual character of the merchants of New York,—and of no little utility to the community of the city at large. Even at that time it numbered more than 5,300 members. During the term of his office, it attained a higher degree of prosperity than in any preceding year of its existence. He was tendered a nomination for re-election, but declined it in consequence of the intended change in his occupation.