

**A SKETCH OF THE LIFE  
AND WORKS OF  
GEORGE W. WHISTLER,  
CIVIL ENGINEER**

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A Sketch of the Life and Works of George W. Whistler, Civil Engineer by George L. Vose

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**GEORGE L. VOSE**

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CIVIL ENGINEER**




A SKETCH *g. 1126*  
OF  
THE LIFE AND WORKS  
OF  
GEORGE W. WHISTLER  
Civil Engineer

BY  
GEORGE L. VOSE *g. 1126*  
PRESIDENT OF THE BOSTON SOCIETY OF CIVIL ENGINEERS

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## NOTE.

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I N placing my name upon the titlepage of this sketch, I do so more as a compiler than as an author. My only object has been to collect such facts, from those of our older engineers who knew Major Whistler, as would enable me to place before the younger members of the profession some record of one of its most brilliant ornaments; to hold up an illustrious example of all that is worthy of imitation; to show them something of one who was equally admired as an engineer, and beloved as a man. Whatever of value may be found in the sketch must be credited to that rapidly decreasing band of veteran engineers who have recalled for me their early years and their early labors; men who saw the beginning of the railroad system in America, and many of whom had the good fortune to begin

their career under the great master whose memory is so fondly cherished by all who were connected with him. Not only have I availed myself to the fullest extent of the recollections of these men, without which I could have done nothing; but I have also used their exact language whenever I could, as the reader is thus placed in closer communication with the subject of the sketch than would be possible in any other way. It is a most delightful thing to see how the old enthusiasm and the youthful admiration of these veterans in the profession kindle anew as they recall their early service under Major Whistler. It was indeed no common man who could so inspire his assistants and associates, and who could leave so indelible an impression, not only upon their minds, but in their hearts.

I am especially indebted for the material which is here presented, to Gen. George S. Greene of New York, to Col. Julius W. Adams of Brooklyn, to Messrs. William Raymond Lee and Charles S. Storrow of Boston, to James B. Francis of Lowell, and to the late E. S. Chesborough of Chicago, nearly all of whom in their early life were associated with Major Whistler. I am also under obligations to



Dr. William Gibbs McNeill Whistler of London, to G. H. Prince, Esq., of St. Petersburg, to Messrs. William E. Worthen and John Bogart of New York, to Mrs. Gen. D. H. Rucker of Washington, to Lieut. G. N. Whistler of the United-States Army, to Thomas D. Whistler of Tarrytown, to the superintendent of the United-States Military Academy, to Dr. George D. Stanton of Stonington, to Samuel Nott of Hartford, to E. H. Hazard of Providence, and to John B. Winslow and Joseph Ropes of Boston. The officers of the several libraries in Boston, and of the historical societies in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut, have aided me in many ways in obtaining information; and the managers of the several railroads with which Major Whistler was connected have given me access at all times to their archives.

The portrait facing the titlepage is from an engraving published in New York about the time of Major Whistler's death, and shows him in the prime of manhood. It is considered an excellent likeness by those who knew him.

In conclusion, I may use the words of one of America's foremost engineers, who even as I write

has closed his long and useful life, leaving behind a reputation unsurpassed for sound judgment, great practical ability, and the most sterling worth: "Whenever the true historian of civil engineering in this country shall arise, he will give to Major Whistler a position of which its younger members to-day appear to have no conception, and of which many of the older appear to have very inadequate ideas."

G. L. V.

## GEORGE W. WHISTLER.

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FEW persons, even among those best acquainted with our modern railroad system, are aware of the early struggles of the men to whose foresight, energy, and skill the new mode of transportation owes its introduction into this country. The railroad problem in the United States was quite a different one from that in Europe. Had we simply copied the railways of England, we should have ruined the system at the outset for this country. In England, where the railroad had its origin, money was plenty, the land was densely populated, and the demand for rapid and cheap transportation already existed. A great many short lines connecting the great centres of industry were required, and for the construction of such in the most substantial manner the money was easily obtained. In America, on the contrary, a land of enormous extent, almost entirely undeveloped, but of great possibilities, lines of hundreds and even