

**FESTIVAL OF THE CONNECTICUT
ASSOCIATION AT THE REVERE HOUSE,
BOSTON, JANUARY 14, 1857: WITH
THE CONSTITUTION, OFFICERS, AND
MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION**

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Festival of the Connecticut Association at the Revere House, Boston, January 14, 1857: with the constitution, officers, and members of the Association by Various

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OF THE

CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION,

AT THE

REVERE HOUSE, BOSTON,

JANUARY 14, 1857.

WITH THE CONSTITUTION, OFFICERS, AND MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION.

BOSTON:

PRESS OF T. R. MARVIN, 42 CONGRESS STREET.

1857.

FESTIVAL
OF THE
SONS OF CONNECTICUT.

In the Spring of 1856, an informal meeting of Sons of Connecticut, residing in Boston and its vicinity, was called with a view to the formation of a Society for the purpose of mutual acquaintance, and the cultivation of friendly and social relations among each other; and also for the purpose of recalling the memory of the great and good deeds and beneficent institutions of the father-land. Some fifty or sixty gentlemen responded to the call, and a Committee of their number was raised, who subsequently reported a plan of organization, and a constitution and by-laws for the Society, under the name of the CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION, it being designed to include ladies, as well as gentlemen, of Connecticut birth or descent, residing in Massachusetts.

The Association has flourished uninterruptedly; several stated meetings have been held, in furtherance of its objects; and its first Annual Festival was celebrated with great brilliancy and success, at the Revere House, on the 14th of January, 1857. The occasion was one of much interest. The tables were laid for two hundred and fifty persons, and they were filled. They were ornamented with great elegance and beauty. A most interesting feature of the occasion was the presence of ladies.

George M. Browne, Esq., the President of the Association, presided. On his right sat His Excellency Henry J. Gardner, Governor of Massachusetts, Mrs. Browne, wife of the President, Oliver Eldredge, Esq., and others; on the left of the President, were Mrs. Gardner, wife of the Governor, Hon. Robert C. Winthrop, Rev. Dr. and Mrs. Alexander H. Vinton, Judge Charles H. Warren, and others. The President welcomed the company in a few appropriate remarks, and invited Rev. E. M. P. Wells, D. D., to implore the divine blessing, which that gentleman proceeded to do in an impressive manner.

After the luxuries of the feast had been sufficiently partaken of, the PRESIDENT arose and spoke as follows:

On the 14th of January, 1639, the freemen of Connecticut, who had gone out from Massachusetts, assembled at Hartford, and adopted a Constitution, remarkable for its liberal and enlightened provisions for self-government.

On the 14th of January, 1857, we, sons and daughters of Connecticut, who have come back to Massachusetts, together with our welcome and honored guests, have met to commemorate that and other great deeds and the patriotic men of that noble State.

The period to which I refer, 1639, it will be remembered, was just before the Rebellion and the civil wars in England, when Charles I. was striving to rule without a Parliament, and to establish and enforce the divine right of kings—and when all the rest of Europe was wrapped in the lethargy of despotism. It was at this period that the free planters of Connecticut framed a constitution which embodies all the great principles of civil liberty and republican government. Under it they elected their own rulers and magistrates, and enacted their own laws, without the supervision of any power whatsoever.

The experience of two centuries and upwards, in that and other communities, and the studies and reflections of statesmen, have hardly suggested a change in the fundamental principles of the frame of government adopted by the Connecticut colonists in 1639. Under that constitution they lived and prospered until the restoration of the Stuarts.

When Charles II. returned to the throne of his ancestors, and the people of England, from seeking too much, seemed to have lost all hopes of liberty, it was thought best by the Connecticut colonists to endeavor to obtain a charter. The wise men of the colony themselves drew up the charter, such as they wished it to be, embodying and re-enacting the principles of the constitution of 1639; and they appointed an agent to go to England and procure its adoption. That agent was John Winthrop. By the ability, the influence and the address of Winthrop, the royal assent was obtained April 20, 1662, to the charter, as drawn up by the colonists themselves.

Under the charter, as under the constitution which it succeeded, the freemen of the colony elected their own governors and made their own laws. With the exception of the brief usurpation of Andros, under James II., no royal governor ever held the chief magistracy in Connecticut, no royal assent was ever necessary to the validity of their laws. So completely did the charter embody the great principles of self-government, so entirely were the people their own rulers under it, that at the time of our Revolution no change whatever was necessary in their fundamental law. They lived on under the charter; and the greatest change made was to strike out two words from the commissions of justices of the peace and other officers, so that instead of appearing to be "His Majesty's justices of the peace," they became simply "justices of the peace;" and to abolishing the oath of allegiance. The State was governed under the charter until 1818, when a new constitution was adopted—varying, however, from the charter and from the constitution of 1639, rather in details than in principles.

Connecticut, left so free and self-governed, was always quick to foresee and to resist any attempt at usurpation. When the British Parliament, by unconstitutional laws, sought to raise a revenue by taxing America, that colony, with Massachusetts and the rest, resisted and repelled the invasion of her colonial and chartered rights; and when the Boston Port Bill, the crowning act of oppression, which precipitated the Revolution, went into effect in June, 1774, the whole population of Connecticut was aroused; meetings were held in all the towns, and they every where resolved that "the cause of Boston was the cause of all the North American Colonies."

Of all the colonial Governors at the opening of the Revolution, the Governor of Connecticut alone adhered to the patriot cause. Jonathan Trumbull, a name ever to be held in honor by sons of Connecticut, then sat in the chair of State in that colony, and there he sat to the triumphant end of the war, giving the aid of his clear judgment and eminent abilities, and exerting himself to raise men and means for the common cause. Washington relied on him as upon a brother.

The contributions of Connecticut, in men and material and subsistence for the war, throughout the Revolution, were not exceeded, in proportion to her revenue, by those of any colony in the confederacy.

In the Congress of the Confederation, and in the Convention that framed our National Constitution, Connecticut acted a conspicuous part. From that time afterwards, her Shermans, Ellsworths, Griswolds, Trumbulls, Daggetts, and other great names, have illustrated the history of the State and Nation.

The social, civil, literary and religious institutions of Connecticut are a source of just pride to her sons, wherever they may be. Indeed, in every aspect we may say, the lines have fallen to us in pleasant places. We look with respect and gratitude and filial regard upon all her institutions, upon all her history; we cherish the memory of her great deeds and her great men; nor shall any change of scene repress the homage of our hearts for the good old State.

"No mortal hand
Shall e'er untie the filial band
That knits me to my native strand."

But while we regard with filial affection our native State, we are no less loyal to the State of our adoption. A large part of us trace our lineage to Massachusetts—to the Old Colony or to the Bay—and coming here is only coming back to the homes of our ancestors. Eastern Connecticut was largely settled by colonists from Plymouth; and the earliest permanent colony on the river above Saybrook, went out, as is well known, under the energetic Hooker, from this immediate neighborhood. There was, indeed, a debate here in the General Court whether to let the colonists go. They wished to go, because they said they were "straightened for room." On the other hand, it was urged that they were bound in conscience to remain in Massachusetts, and uphold her institutions.

Well, Sir, [to the Governor,] we have come back to aid, as far as we may be able, in upholding the institutions of Massachusetts. We trust, we hope at least, she may not find the stock to have degenerated in the rugged soil, and under the free air and free institutions of Connecticut; and we pledge ourselves to as earnest a devotion to the honor, the welfare and the prosperity of Massachusetts, as if our eyes had first seen the light on her consecrated soil.

The President then said, that the Sons and Daughters of Connecticut, wherever they may be, are always loyal to the constitution of their country, and hold in honor her legally chosen magistrates; and he called on PERKINS CLEVELAND, Esq., from Hampton, now of Boston, to respond to the first regular toast:

The President of the United States.

SPEECH OF MR. CLEVELAND.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:—I appreciate not less the honor than the delicacy of the part you have been pleased to assign me in these graceful and elegant festivities. I have not brought with me well-chosen words, or any mental preparation, commensurate with the dignity of the occasion and the high character of the Association under whose auspices we are so happily convened. Until within a few hours, it had been confidently hoped that a distinguished citizen of our good old State,* whose reputation for genius and eloquence is not restricted even by the boundaries of our broad republic, would have been with us to-night, to respond to the patriotic sentiment which has just fallen from your lips. When I consider his intellectual resources, his ripe scholarship, his graceful and impassioned oratory, and his earnest devotion to whatever is designed to promote the honor and enhance the prosperity of the glorious old State of which he is an ornament, I regret for your sake and my own, more than I can express, that he is not here to perform the honorable part allotted him. As his unworthy representative for the time, I must bespeak your kind indulgence, while I give myself up, for a very few moments, to such suggestions as this occasion and these surroundings may bring to my lips.

* Hon. William James Hammersley.