

**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF THE
STATE OFFICERS AND MEMBERS
OF THE LEGISLATURE OF THE
STATE OF NEW YORK, IN 1858**

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Biographical sketches of the state officers and members of the Legislature of the state of New York, in 1858 by Wm. D. Murphy

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WM. D. MURPHY

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INTRODUCTION.

"Biographers only things of weight,
Lives of persons or affairs of state,
Briefly, with truth and clearness, should relate:
Laconic shortness memory feeds."

In presenting this volume to the public, the author has been influenced wholly by a desire to furnish an impartial, truthful, and condensed biography of the individuals mentioned therein. This, he can safely say, he has not failed to accomplish, and while he has encountered far more difficulty and labor than was anticipated in the beginning, he takes great pleasure here in acknowledging the valuable assistance he has received, in securing the material for the work, from the State Officers and Members of the Legislature themselves.

It will be seen that the necessity of an index to the volume has been entirely obviated by the alphabetical order in which the Senators and Members of Assembly have been respectively arranged.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES.

JOHN A. KING,
GOVERNOR.

Gov. King was born in the city of New York, in 1788, and is therefore now seventy years of age. He would not easily, however, gain credit for such an advanced age. Erect, prompt, and active in his motions, "his eye is not dim nor his natural force abated," and the casual observer might easily set him down at fifty-five years. He is the eldest son of the Hon. Rufus King, who filled so large and prominent a place in the early annals of this state and of the Union, and whose sons inherit, in so unusual a degree, the high order of ability and capacity for public life which distinguished their sire.

Rufus King was born in Massachusetts, and filled consecutively the office of representative in the State legislature and delegate to the Constitutional convention. He was, also, a member of the convention which framed the present Federal constitution, in 1787, and enacted an influential and conspicuous part in its important and difficult deliberations. In the

same year, he removed to New York, and became the first United States Senator elected from that state. In the Senate he was a recognized leader of the Federalist or Anti Democratic party. He aided in the expulsion of Albert Gallatin from that body, and subsequently, when he and Alexander Hamilton attempted to address a public meeting in the city of New York, called to uphold the celebrated "Jay Treaty" with Great Britain, the citizens refused to hear them, lest they might defeat the treaty. They, however, accomplished their purpose by publishing a series of articles in the newspapers of the day. Mr. King was again elected to the Senate in 1795, and in 1796 resigned to accept the mission to England from President Washington. In 1813, and again in 1820, he was returned to the Senate. In 1816 he was nominated for Governor by his party against his own wishes, and was beaten by Daniel D. Tompkins, the Democratic candidate. In 1804 and 1805, he was also the unsuccessful Federal candidate for Vice-President of the United States, and in 1816 ran unsuccessfully against James Monroe for President. In 1821 he sat in the New York State Constitutional convention. He died in 1828, at the ripe old age of seventy-three, full of years and of honors.

His friends claim for Rufus King that he was the originator of the celebrated Congressional ordinance of 1787, by which negro slavery was abolished in the North-west territories. When in Congress, in 1820, he also opposed the Missouri proviso or "Compromise," and was prominent in opposition to the ad-

mission of that state into the Union. Thomas H. Benton, in his "Thirty Years' View," does full justice to the career of Rufus King.

The two brothers of Rufus, William and Cyrus King, also occupied prominent positions as statesmen. The former was the first Governor of Maine; the latter a Representative from that state in Congress.

Charles, the second son of Rufus King, was born in 1789; has served in the Assembly, and was distinguished as the editor of the *New York American*, and the *Courier and Enquirer*. He is now the president of Columbia college. The third son, James King, was born in 1791, and was one of the most prominent bankers in New York city. He was an officer of the militia in the war of 1812, and was a prominent member of the Thirty-First Congress. The youngest brother, Edward King, of Cincinnati, was President of the Senate of the state of Ohio, and was once defeated for United States Senator by a single vote. He died in 1831.

John A. King was mustered into the service of the United States in 1812, and held the rank of lieutenant in the militia during the war. He has six times represented the county of Queens in the Assembly—during the years 1812, '20, '21, '32, '38, and '40, and was a member of the State Senate in 1823. In 1825 he was Secretary of Legation at London, under his father. He was a member of the Thirty-First Congress, where he highly distinguished himself in debate. He opposed the Compromise measures of 1850, and the Fugitive Slave Law, with much ability and

zeal. In 1856 he was a delegate to the Republican Presidential convention at Philadelphia, and his name was suggested for the Vice-Presidential nomination, on the ticket with Col. Fremont. It is said he had only to signify his willingness to accept, to have secured the nomination, which was given to Mr. Dayton, of New Jersey.

By profession Gov. King is a lawyer, but for many years his occupation has been that of a farmer. He possesses a large fortune, and has devoted much of his leisure to the study of agriculture as a science. His addresses on this subject delivered on various occasions, and his selection as president of the New York State Agricultural society, are strong evidence that he is not at all unfamiliar with it. Like another Cincinnatus, however, he has always been ready to leave the plow at the call of his country. He lives in the young Patroon's mansion, at Albany, which has been elegantly and tastefully fitted up, where, following his example at Washington, he dispenses the hospitalities of the Executive mansion in a manner that equals any of his predecessors.

As a speaker Gov. King is effective. His fine, open countenance, commanding presence, rich, sonorous voice, and graceful gesticulation, carry conviction to the most unwilling listener. He is earnest and impassioned—a man of positive, affirmative, and self-reliant character. He is an excellent debater—logical and forcible, and has never failed to take a leading part in the various parliamentary bodies of which he has been a member. He is personally a

popular man. He has a genial, frank way, which never fails to set the visitor at ease. He is much liked by the people of Albany, among whom he is no stranger. The Executive chamber is daily thronged with visitors, and in the dispatch of business he is ably seconded by his Private Secretary, the Hon. Henry I. Seaman, formerly member of Congress from the First district, and a most capable and efficient assistant in the multifarious duties of the office. The post of Governor is no sinecure.

Gov. King was elected to his present high position by a majority of about eighty-eight thousand votes over Amasa J. Parker, the Democratic candidate, in the fall of 1856. He is strong with his party, and has given apparent general satisfaction to all its members. It is currently supposed that he will be nominated for re-election, should such be his desire in the coming summer. Long may he live to enjoy the blessings of a grateful people for the good he has done in the great cause of his country!

HENRY R. SELDEN,

LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR.

Lieut.-Gov. Selden is a native of Lyme, New London county, Conn., where he was born on the 14th of October, 1805, and is descended from highly respectable and intelligent parents. He was sent to the village school at an early age, and received a liberal