

AMERICAN
BIOGRAPHICAL, AND HISTORICAL
DICTIONARY,

CONTAINING

AN ACCOUNT OF THE
LIVES, CHARACTERS, AND WRITINGS

OF THE

MOST EMINENT PERSONS IN NORTH AMERICA FROM ITS FIRST
DISCOVERY TO THE PRESENT TIME,

AND A SUMMARY OF THE

HISTORY OF THE SEVERAL COLONIES

AND OF

THE UNITED STATES,

BY WILLIAM ALLEN, A. M.

Quique sui memores alios fecere merendo. VIRG.

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DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS, TO WIT;

SEAL. BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the twenty seventh day of July, in the thirty fourth year of the independence of the United States of America, WILLIAM ALLEN of the said district has deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as author, in the words following, to wit; "An American biographical and historical dictionary, containing an account of the lives, characters, and writings of the most eminent persons in North America from its first discovery to the present time, and a summary of the history of the several colonies and of the United States, by WILLIAM ALLEN, A. M. Quique sui memores fecere merendo Virgil."

In conformity to the act of the congress of the United States, entitled, "an act for the encouragement of learning by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times, therein mentioned;" and also to an act, entitled, "an act supplementary to an act, entitled, an act for the encouragement of learning by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times, therein mentioned; and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints."

W. S. SHAW, { clerk of the district
of Massachusetts.

PREFACE.

Bernhard K. Schaefer 20, Freund

THE following work presents itself to the public with no claims to attention, but such as are founded upon the interest, which may be felt in the lives of Americans. Finding himself a few years ago in a literary retirement, with no important duties, which pressed immediately upon him, the author conceived the plan of this dictionary. He was desirous of bringing to the citizens of the United States more information, than was generally possessed, respecting the illustrious men of former times, the benefactors and ornaments of this country, who have passed away. He persuaded himself, that if he could collect the fragments of biography, which were buried in the mass of American history, or scattered amidst a multitude of tracts of various kinds, and could fashion these materials into a regular form, so as to place before the eye our great and good men, if not in their full dimensions, yet in their true shape, he should render an acceptable service to his countrymen. This work with no little labor he has now completed; and the inexperienced artist, in his first essay, can hope only, that his design will be commended. He wishes chiefly, that as the images of departed excellence are surveyed, the spirit, which animated them, may be caught by the beholder.

As an apology however for the deficiencies and errors of various kinds, which may be found in the work, a full exposition of his plan, and some representation of the difficulty of executing it seem to be necessary.

12-6-66

It was proposed to give some account of the persons, who first discovered the new world; of those, who had a principal agency in laying the foundations of the several colonies; of those, who have held important offices and discharged the duties of them with ability and integrity; of those, who have been conspicuous in the learned professions; of those, who have been remarkable for genius and knowledge, or who have written any

thing, deserving of remembrance ; of the distinguished friends of literature and science ; of the statesmen, the patriots, and heroes, who have contended for American liberty, or aided in the establishment of our civil institutions ; and of all, whose lives, bright with Christian virtue, might furnish examples, which should be worthy of imitation. It was determined to enlarge this wide field by giving as complete a list, as could be made, of the writings of each person, and by introducing the first ministers of the principal towns for the purpose of illustrating the history of this country. The design included also a very compendious history of the United States, as well as of each separate colony and state, for the satisfaction of the reader, who might wish to view the subjects of the biographical sketches in connexion with the most prominent facts relating to the country, in which they lived. In addition to all this, it was intended to annex such references, as would point out the sources, from which information should be derived, and as might direct to more copious intelligence, than could be contained in this work.

Such were the objects, which the author had in view, when he commenced an enterprise, of whose magnitude and difficulty he was not sufficiently sensible before he had advanced too far to be able to retreat. The modern compilers of similar works in Europe have little else to do but to combine or abridge the labors of their predecessors, and employ the materials previously collected to their hands. But in the compilation of this work a new and untrodden field was to be explored. It became necessary not only to examine the whole of American history, in order to know who have taken a conspicuous part in the transactions of this country ; but to supply from other sources the imperfect accounts of general historical writers. By a recurrence to the references it will be seen, that much toil has been encountered. But though the authorities may seem to be unnecessarily multiplied, yet there has been some moderation in introducing them, for in many instances they do not by any means exhibit the extent of the researches, which have been made. It could not be expected or wished, that newspapers, pamphlets, and other productions should be referred to for undisputed dates and single facts, which they have afforded, and which have been embodied with regular accounts. The labor however of searching for information has frequently been less, than that of comparing different statements, endeavoring to reconcile them when they disagreed, adjusting the chronology, combining the independent facts, and forming a consistent whole of what existed only in disjointed parts. Sometimes the mind has been over-

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whelmed by the variety and abundance of intelligence; and sometimes the author has prosecuted his inquiries in every direction, and found only a barren waste.

While he represents these circumstances to the candid reader, he indulges the belief, that the necessary imperfections of this work will be somewhat shielded from the severity of criticism. In surveying it he perceives, that a just proportion between the several articles has not always been preserved, that some names have been overlooked, and that some are introduced, which might have given place to others, that have been intentionally omitted. Though a smaller type has been used, than was originally designed, and one hundred and forty pages added to the proposed number, yet there has been such an unexpected accumulation of materials, as to render it necessary not only greatly to abridge many articles, but entirely to exclude accounts of about two hundred persons, which had been prepared.

For the large space, which is sometimes occupied in describing the last hours of the persons, of whom a sketch is given, the following reasons are assigned. In the lives of our fellow men there is no period so important to them and so interesting to us, as the period, which immediately precedes their dissolution. To see one of our brethren at a point of his existence, beyond which the next step will either plunge him down a precipice into an abyss, from which he will never rise, or will elevate him to everlasting glory, is a spectacle, which attracts us not merely by its sublimity, but because we know, that the flight of time is rapidly hastening us to the same crisis. We wish to see men in the terrible situation, which inevitably awaits us; to learn what it is, that can support them, and can secure them. The gratification of this desire to behold what is great and awful, and the communication of the aids, which may be derived from the conduct of dying men, have accordingly been combined in the objects of this work. After recounting the vicissitudes, attending the affairs of men, the author was irresistibly inclined to turn from the fluctuations of human life, and to dwell, when his subject would give him an opportunity, upon the calm and firm hopes of the Christian, and the sure prospects of eternity. While he thus soothed his own mind, he also believed, that he should afford a resting place to the minds of others, fatigued with following their brethren amidst their transient occupations, their successes, their disappointments, and their afflictions.

Some terms are used, which relate to local circumstances, and which require those circumstances to be pointed out. In several of the New England states, when the annual election of

the several branches of the legislature is completed, and the government is organized, it has been an ancient practice to have a sermon preached in the audience of the newly elected rulers, which is called the election sermon. This phrase would not need an explanation to an inhabitant of New England. The names of pastor and teacher as distinct officers in the church frequently occur. Soon after the first settlement of this country, when some societies enjoyed the labors of two ministers, they bore the titles of teacher and pastor, of which it was the duty of the former to attend particularly to doctrine, and of the latter to exhortation; the one was to instruct and the other to persuade. But the boundary between these two offices was not well defined, and was in fact very little regarded. The distinction of the name itself did not exist long.

Great care has been taken to render the dates accurate, and to avoid the mistakes, which have been made from inattention to the former method of reckoning time, when March was the first month of the year. If any one, ignorant of this circumstance, should look into Dr. Mather's *Magnalia*, or ecclesiastical history of New England, he would sometimes wonder at the absurdity of the writer. He would read for instance in the life of president Chauncy, that he died in February 1671, and will find it previously said that he attended the commencement in the same year, which was in July. Thus too Peter Hobart is said to have died in January, and yet to have been infirm in the summer of 1678. When it is remembered, that March was the first month, these accounts are easy to be reconciled. There seems not however to have been any uniformity in disposing of the days between the first and the twenty fifth of March, for sometimes they are considered as belonging to the antecedent and sometimes to the subsequent year. American writers, it is believed, have generally if not always applied them to the latter. When the figures for two years are written, as in dates before the adoption of the new style in 1752 is found frequently to be the case not only for the days above mentioned but for the days in January and February, it is the latter year, which corresponds with our present mode of reckoning. Thus March 1, 1689 was sometimes written March 1, 1688, 9, or with the figures placed one above the other. The months were designated usually by the names of the first, the second, &c. so that February was the twelfth month.

No apology is necessary for the free use, which has been made of the labors of others, for the plan of this book is so essentially different from that of any, which has preceded it, that

the author has not encroached upon the objects, which others have had in view. He has had no hesitation in using their very language, whenever it suited him. Compilers seem to be licensed pillagers. Like the youth of Sparta, they may lay their hands upon plunder without a crime, if they will but seize it with adroitness. The list of American literary productions, which has been rendered as complete as possible, is for the sake of method placed at the close of each article, and in giving the titles of them it will be perceived, that there has frequently been an economy of words as far as was consistent with distinctness of representation. The biographical chart prefixed is on a plan, somewhat improved. It was thought a defect in Dr. Priestley's charts, that the lines, which denoted the length of life, were left so indeterminate. The short period of a little more than two centuries, within which this chart is confined, furnished an opportunity for expanding and multiplying the divisional lines, and thus of defining more precisely the length of each man's life. The distance of every five years, it will be seen, is determined by the perpendicular lines, and each intermediate year is distinguished in the following manner. When the broad horizontal line terminates singly a little to the right hand of the perpendicular, this indicates one year's distance from it; when it terminates with a parallel stroke over it, this indicates two years' remove from the perpendicular; when it terminates with a parallel stroke under it, three years; when it terminates singly near to the right hand perpendicular, this indicates four years' distance from the left or one from the right hand perpendicular. Thus it will be instantly seen, that Rittenhouse died in 1801, Minot in 1802, S. Adams in 1803, and Hamilton in 1804; and that Johnson was born in 1696, Pemberton in 1672, Edwards in 1703, and Belknap in 1744.

The author cannot neglect here to express his acknowledgments to those gentlemen, who have afforded him any aid in his inquiries, whether by imparting to him information, or putting into his hands their collection of American pamphlets, or opening to him their private libraries; nor can he be insensible of his obligations for access to that noble institution, the Athenaeum in Boston, and to the library of the Massachusetts historical society.

He is aware, that he lives in times, which perhaps are like all other times, when the sympathies of parties of different kinds are very strong; and he believes, that he has sought less to conciliate them than to follow truth, though she might not lead him into any of the paths, along which the many are pressing. With-

out resolving to be impartial it would indicate no common destitution of upright and honorable principles to attempt a representation of the characters of men. He may have misapprehended, and he may have done what is worse. All are liable to errors, and he knows enough of the windings of the heart as to remember, that errors may proceed from prejudice, or indolence of attention, and be criminal, while they are cherished as honest and well founded convictions, the results of impartial inquiry. He trusts however, that nothing will be found in this book to counteract the influence of genuine religion, evincing itself in piety and good works, or to weaken the attachment of Americans to their well balanced republic, which equally abhors the tyranny of irresponsible authority, the absurdity of hereditary wisdom, and the anarchy of lawless liberty.

Cambridge, August 2, 1809.

oratory, 1797; an answer to Dr. Priestley's considerations on the doctrine of phlogiston and the decomposition of water, founded upon demonstrative experiments, in the fourth volume of the transactions of the American philosophical society; and an edition of Chaptal's chemistry, with valuable notes, 2 vols. 8vo, 1807.

WOOSTER (DAVID), major general in the revolutionary war, was born at Stratford in 1711, and was graduated at Yale college in 1738. At the commencement of the war with Great Britain he was appointed to the chief command of the troops in the service of Connecticut, and made a brigadier general in the continental service; but this commission he afterwards resigned. In 1776 he was appointed the first major general of the militia of his native state. While opposing a detachment of British troops, whose object was to destroy the public stores at Danbury, he was mortally wounded at Ridgfield April 27, 1777, and died on the second of May.—*Gordon*, ii. 464; *Holmes' annals*, ii. 374, 375; *life of Stiles*, 382.

WORTHINGTON (JOHN, LL. D.), an eminent barrister, was graduated at Yale college in 1740. In 1774 he was a member of the legislature of Massachusetts, and opposed the measures of the friends of liberty. His name was in the same year included in the list of the mandamus counsellors, but he declined the appointment. He died at Springfield in April 1800, aged eighty one years. Mr. Ames married his daughter.

WYLLYS (GEORGE), governor of Connecticut in 1642, came from England to Hartford in 1638 and died in 1644. He was eminently pious, and from regard to the purity of divine worship left a fine estate in the county of Warwick and encountered the hardships of a wilderness. His descendants are distinguished in the civil history of Connecticut.—*Trumbull*, i. 150; *Holmes' life of Stiles*, 15.

WYTHE (GEORGE), chancellor of Virginia, and a distinguished friend of his country, was born in the county of Elizabeth city in 1726. His father was a respectable farmer, and his mother was a woman of uncommon knowledge and strength of mind. She taught the Latin language, with which she was intimately acquainted, and which she spoke fluently, to her son; but his education was in other respects very much neglected. At school he learned only to read and write, and to apply the five first rules of arithmetic. His parents having died before he attained the age of twenty one years, like many unthinking youths he commenced a career of dissipation and intemperance, and did not disengage himself from it before he reached the age of thirty. He then bitterly lamented the loss of those nine years of his life, and of the learning, which during that period he might have acquired. But never did any man more effectually redeem his time. From the moment, when he resolved on reformation, he devoted himself most intensely to his studies. Without the assistance of any instructor he acquired an accurate knowledge of the Greek, and he read the best authors in that as

well as in the Latin language. He made himself also a profound lawyer, becoming perfectly versed in the civil and common law, and in the statutes of Great Britain and Virginia. He was also a skilful mathematician, and was well acquainted with moral and natural philosophy. The wild and thoughtless youth was now converted into a sedate and prudent man, delighting entirely in literary pursuits. At this period he acquired that attachment to the Christian religion, which, though his faith was afterwards shaken by the difficulties suggested by sceptical writers, never altogether forsook him, and towards the close of his life was renovated and firmly established. Though he never connected himself with any sect of Christians, yet for many years he constantly attended church, and the bible was his favorite book.

Having obtained a license to practise law, he took his station at the bar of the old general court with many other great men, whose merit has been the boast of Virginia. Among them he was conspicuous not for his eloquence, or ingenuity in maintaining a bad cause, but for his sound sense and learning, and rigid attachment to justice. He never undertook the support of a cause, which he knew to be bad, or which did not appear to be just and honorable. He was even known, when he doubted the statement of his client, to insist upon his making an affidavit to its truth, and in every instance, where it was in his power, he examined the witnesses as to the facts intended to be proved before he brought the suit, or agreed to defend it.

When the time arrived, which heaven had destined for the separation of the wide, confederated republic of America from the dominion of Great Britain, Mr. Wythe was one of the instruments in the hand of providence for accomplishing that great work. He took a decided part in the very first movements of opposition. Not content merely to fall in with the wishes of his fellow citizens, he assisted in persuading them not to submit to British tyranny. With a prophetic mind he looked forward to the event of an approaching war, and resolutely prepared to encounter all its evils rather than to resign his attachment to liberty. With his pupil and friend, Thomas Jefferson, he roused the people to resistance. As the controversy grew warm, his zeal became proportionally fervent. He joined a corps of volunteers, accustomed himself to military discipline, and was ready to march at the call of his country. But that country, to whose interests he was so sincerely attached, had other duties of more importance for him to perform. It was his destiny to obtain distinction as a statesman, legislator, and judge, and not as a warrior. Before the war commenced, he was elected a member of the Virginia assembly. After having been for some time speaker of the house of burgesses, he was sent by the members of that body as one of their delegates to the congress, which assembled May 18, 1775, and did not separate until it had declared

the independence of America. In that most enlightened and patriotic assembly he possessed no small share of influence. He was one of those, who signed the memorable declaration, by which the heroic legislators of this country pledged "their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor" to maintain and defend its violated rights. But the voice of his native state soon called him from the busy scene, where his talents had been so nobly exerted. By a resolution of the general assembly of Virginia, dated November 5, 1776, Thomas Jefferson, Edmund Pendleton, George Wythe, George Mason, and Thomas Ludwell Lee were appointed a committee to revise the laws of the commonwealth. This was a work of very great labor and difficulty. The committee of revisors did not disappoint the expectations of their country. In the commencement of their labors they were deprived of the assistance, which might have been received from the abilities of Messrs. Mason and Lee by the death of the one and the resignation of the other. The remaining three prosecuted their task with indefatigable activity and zeal, and June 18, 1779 made a report of one hundred and twenty six bills, which they had prepared. This report showed an intimate knowledge of the great principles of legislation, and reflected the highest honor upon those, who formed it. The people of Virginia are indebted to it for almost all the best parts of their present code of laws. Among the changes, then made in the monarchical system of jurisprudence, which had been previously in force, the most important were effected by the act abolishing the right of primogeniture, and directing the real estate of persons dying intestate to be equally divided among their children, or other nearest relations; by the act for regulating conveyances, which converted all estates in tail into fees simple, and thus destroyed one of the supports of the proud and overbearing distinctions of particular families; and finally by the act for the establishment of religious freedom. Had all the proposed bills been adopted by the legislature, other changes of great importance would have taken place. A wise and universal system of education would have been established, giving to the children of the poorest citizen the opportunity of attaining science, and thus of rising to honor and extensive usefulness. The proportion between crimes and punishments would have been better adjusted, and malefactors would have been made to promote the interests of the commonwealth by their labor. But the public spirit of the assembly could not keep pace with the liberal views of Wythe.

After finishing the task of new modelling the laws, he was employed to carry them into effect according to their true intent and spirit by being placed in the difficult office of judge of a court of equity. He was appointed one of the three judges of the high court of chancery, and afterwards sole chancellor of Virginia, in which station he continued until the day of his death, during a peri-

of more than twenty years. His extraordinary disinterestedness and patriotism were now most conspicuously displayed. Although the salary, allowed him by the commonwealth, was extremely scanty, yet he contentedly lived upon it even in the expensive city of Richmond, and devoted his whole time to the service of his country. With that contempt of wealth, which so remarkably distinguished him from other men, he made a present of one half of his land in Elizabeth city to his nephew, and the purchase money of the remainder, which he sold, was not paid him for many years. While he resided in Williamsburg he accepted the professorship of law in the college of William and Mary, but resigned it when his duties as chancellor required his removal to Richmond. His resources were therefore small ; yet with his liberal and charitable disposition he continued, by means of that little, to do much good, and always to preserve his independence. This he accomplished by temperance and economy.

He was a member of the Virginia convention, which in June 1788 considered the proposed constitution of the United States. During the debates he acted for the most part as chairman. Being convinced, that the confederation was defective in the energy, necessary to preserve the union and liberty of America, this venerable patriot, then beginning to bow under the weight of years, rose in the convention, and exerted his voice, almost too feeble to be heard, in contending for a system, on the acceptance of which he conceived the happiness of his country to depend. He was ever attached to the constitution, on account of the principles of freedom and justice, which it contained ; and in every change of affairs he was steady in supporting the rights of man. His political opinions were always firmly republican. Though in 1798 and 1799 he was opposed to the measures, which were adopted in the administration of president Adams, and reprobated the alien and sedition laws, and the raising of the army ; yet he never yielded a moment to the rancor of party spirit, nor permitted the difference of opinion to interfere with his private friendships. He presided twice successively in the college of electors in Virginia, and twice voted for a president, whose political principles coincided with his own. After a short but very excruciating sickness he died June 8, 1806, in the eighty first year of his age. It was supposed, that he was poisoned, but the person suspected was acquitted by a jury of his countrymen. By his last will and testament he bequeathed his valuable library and philosophical apparatus to his friend, Mr. Jefferson, and distributed the remainder of his little property among the grand children of his sister, and the slaves, whom he had set free. He thus wished to liberate the blacks not only from slavery, but from the temptations to vice. He even condescended to impart to them instruction ; and he personally taught the Greek language to a little negro boy, who died a few days before his preceptor.

Chancellor Wythe was indeed an extraordinary man. With all his great qualities he possessed a soul replete with benevolence, and his private life is full of anecdotes, which prove, that it is seldom that a kinder and warmer heart throbs in the breast of a human being. He was of a social and affectionate disposition. From the time, when he was emancipated from the follies of youth, he sustained an unspotted reputation. His integrity was never even suspected. While he practised at the bar, when offers of an extraordinary but well merited compensation were made to him by clients, whose causes he had gained, he would say, that the laborer was indeed worthy of his hire, but the lawful fee was all he had a right to demand, and as to presents he did not want and would not accept them from any man. This grandeur of mind he uniformly preserved to the end of his life. His manner of living was plain and abstemious. He found the means of suppressing the desire of wealth by limiting the number of his wants. An ardent desire to promote the happiness of his fellow men by supporting the cause of justice and maintaining and establishing their rights appears to have been his ruling passion.

As a judge he was remarkable for his rigid impartiality and sincere attachment to the principles of equity, for his vast and various learning, and for his strict and unwearied attention to business. Superior to popular prejudice and every corrupting influence, nothing could induce him to swerve from truth and right. In his decisions he seemed to be a pure intelligence, untouched by human passions, and settling the disputes of men according to the dictates of eternal and immutable justice. Other judges have surpassed him in genius, and a certain facility in despatching causes, but while the vigor of his faculties remained unimpaired, he was seldom surpassed in learning, industry, and judgment.

From a man, entrusted with such high concerns, and whose time was occupied by so many difficult and perplexing avocations, it could scarcely have been expected, that he should have employed a part of it in the toilsome and generally unpleasant task of the education of youth. Yet even to this he was prompted by his genuine patriotism and philanthropy, which induced him for many years to take great delight in educating such young persons, as showed an inclination for improvement. Harrassed as he was with business, and enveloped with papers, belonging to intricate suits in chancery, he yet found time to keep a private school for the instruction of a few scholars, always with very little compensation, and often demanding none. Several living ornaments of their country received their greatest lights from his sublime example and instruction. Such was the upright and venerable Wythe.—*American gleaner and Virginia magazine*, i. 1—3, 17—19, 33—36; *Massa. miss. mag.* v. 10—15; *Debates of Virginia convent. second edit.* 17, 421.