

The
FORTY-NINTH GOVERNOR
of
C O N N E C T I C U T
was
HENRY B. HARRISON

An instructor in a private school who attained scholarship at Yale and was graduated with the highest honors the college could bestow—He studied law, became an anti-slavery leader, and was prominent in the organization of the Republican party in this state—His first political service began in his native city of New Haven and led to the governorship, gracing the office with his scholarly dignity



Henry B. Harrison.

H E N R Y

B A L D W I N

H A R R I S O N

HENRY Baldwin Harrison, one of the first members of the Republican party in Connecticut, and a distinguished lawyer of the state, was born in New Haven on September 11, 1821. He was the son of one of the thrifty, honorable old Connecticut families. As a youth he was a student, and he became an assistant teacher in the famous old-time school at New Haven, of which John E. Lovell was principal. He was fitted for college by Rev. George A. Thatcher, afterwards president of Iowa College, and a distinguished scholar. Entering Yale in 1842 the young collegian attained scholarship, at the same time continuing his duties as an assistant in Lovell's school. He was graduated in 1846 as valedictorian of his class and with the highest honors the college could bestow.

In the fall of 1846 he commenced the study of law with Lucius A. Peck, Esq., and after being admitted to the bar began practice in partnership with Peck. Harrison became interested in politics, and recognized as an anti-slavery leader in Connecticut. In 1854 he was elected a member of the State Senate as

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a Whig. While a member of that body he was the author of the Personal Liberty Bill, and as an active Whig in 1855 was successful in bringing about the nullification of the fugitive slave law. During the years 1855-6 he was one of the men who were prominent in organizing the Republican party in this state. He was the nominee of the party for lieutenant governor in 1857, but was defeated.

In 1865 Harrison again represented New Haven in the General Assembly and his name was frequently mentioned for United States senator and governor. During this session he became chairman of the House Committee on railroads and in Federal relations. He constantly and eloquently advocated the bill giving negroes the electoral franchise. In 1873 he again represented New Haven in the lower house of the General Assembly and was a member of the Judiciary Committee. In 1874 he was the Republican candidate for governor but was defeated by Charles Robert Ingersoll. He was again returned to the General Assembly as a representative from New Haven in 1883, and was made speaker. Harrison was nominated for governor in 1884, and after a closely contested canvass was elected. Governor Harrison served the state in an able manner for two years, retiring in 1887.

Devoting himself absolutely to his large legal practice, Governor Harrison lived quietly at his home in New Haven where he was esteemed as one of the most honored residents of the city. A

Yale biographer has said of Governor Harrison: "Probably his unwillingness to be drawn away from the profession of his choice has more than anything else hindered his receiving political honor."

Governor Harrison died at his home in New Haven on October 29, 1901, and his funeral was attended by the state's leading citizens.

Charles Hopkins Clark in "The Hartford Courant" paid glowing tribute to the brilliant governor and friend: "Connecticut born, Connecticut bred, the first scholar of his year in Connecticut's oldest college, he passed his whole life in his native state and will sleep in a Connecticut grave. From his youth he took a good American's interest in politics, scorning the selfishness that devotes a clear brain and eloquent voice to the unremitting pursuit of private gain.

"As we write his name the later years vanish like a mist and we see again the Harrison of Capitol Hill—the noble head, the keen intellectual face, the unflinching dignity, the unflinching courtesy. We hear again the voice that never lacked the fitting word, always had political conscience behind it and often rose to true eloquence. It seems a strange thing that Henry B. Harrison should be dead. We bid farewell, in this parting, to a loyal and scholarly gentleman who gave his state faithful service in public and private stations all his life long, and who now enriches her with another inspiring memory."