

in all of which he took an active interest. He married, May 8, 1870, Ruby Frances Howe who died at Boston, November 20, 1923. They had no children.

W. L.

JAMES BENJAMIN WILBUR

James Benjamin Wilbur, a member of the Council of the Society since 1921, died in New York City on April 28, 1929, a few days after he had returned from a four months' trip to Europe. He was born in Cleveland, November 11, 1856, the son of James Benjamin Wilbur and Lauretta Welch. After an education in the public schools of Cleveland, he entered immediately into business life, serving as a cashier of the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad Company from 1876 to 1882. In 1884 he removed to Colorado where from 1885 to 1890 he was engaged in ranching and banking. He then organized the Royal Trust Company of Chicago, acting as president from 1896 to 1909. When this company was merged with the Central Trust Company of Illinois, Mr. Wilbur retired and removed to Manchester, Vt., where he developed one of the most beautiful country estates in New England, and where he lived, except for trips to Europe and to the South in the winter, for the remainder of his life. In 1880 he married Carrie B. Hurd of New York, and had one son, James B. Wilbur, Jr. Mrs. Wilbur died in 1917.

Soon after his removal to Vermont, Mr. Wilbur became much interested in book collecting and in historical research. He began to acquire early and rare Vermont books and soon built up a remarkable collection of literature relating to that State, including the leading books of State and local history, many examples of eighteenth century Vermont printing and what was probably the best existing collection of early Vermont laws. There were many fields into which he did not enter, such as newspapers, almanacs and nineteenth

century material which was not historical. In comprehensiveness his collection did not equal the great Vermont library gathered by Mr. Matt B. Jones of Boston, but his success in acquiring the very rare and early items was unquestioned.

This keen concern in Vermont collecting led to his becoming interested in the career of Ira Allen, whom he considered the real father of Vermont and whose life he soon came to realize had been much neglected by historians. Everywhere he sought for material, printed and manuscript, relating to Ira Allen, and he ransacked archives in Canada, England, France and this country for new data. For ten years he worked unflinchingly on the preparation of a real biography of his hero and in 1928 he issued from the press of Houghton Mifflin Co., the "Life of Ira Allen, Founder of Vermont," in two large volumes of over 1100 pages filled with documents of the highest importance to the history of the State and its founding. Fortunate it was that he was able to live to see this work printed, over which he had labored so long. Without historical training and schooled almost exclusively in business, he succeeded at the age of seventy in producing a work of the highest historical value, by uniting a keen sagacity of judgment with an indomitable will to unearth every fact and document which bore on the subject of his quest.

Mr. Wilbur's chief Vermont interest centered in the University of Vermont, at Burlington. A believer in advanced education, he was particularly attracted to this college because Ira Allen was its founder. Mr. Wilbur first presented the college in 1921 with a statue of Ira Allen which was placed in the front campus; this was followed in 1925 by his gift of the Ira Allen Chapel, one of the most beautiful of New England college buildings, with a bell tower 170 feet high. His crowning gift came through a trust established by his will, whereby the University was left a sum which eventually will amount to about three million dollars.

In 1925 the University granted to Mr. Wilbur, in recognition of his attainments, the honorary degree of LL.D.

In 1923 Mr. Wilbur became much interested in the Library of Congress and in the development of its resources for making photostats of American documents in the possession of other libraries. He also was the leading factor in the establishment of the Trust Fund Board which was created in 1925 to hold and administer funds given or bequeathed to the Library of Congress. Upon this Board Mr. Wilbur was the first appointed member, being installed for the initial term of five years. Also to the fund he made a contribution of \$100,000.

Mr. Wilbur's researches a few years ago led him into touch with eastern historical societies. It was the American Antiquarian Society to which he first turned for help in 1919, and in October of that year he sent to the Society his first gift, a copy of the very rare newspaper, "The Herald of Freedom" published at Bethel, Conn., in 1832 by P. T. Barnum. In 1920 he was elected a member of this Society and the following year was chosen a member of the Council. From his first connection with the Society, he stimulated its desire to increase its endorsed funds and to enlarge its income. He always said that a national collecting society with the prestige and usefulness of the Antiquarian Society should have no trouble in enlisting support if it would only make its wants known. He himself set an example by giving liberally to guarantee and building funds in 1921-1927 and in 1928 he made a gift of \$100,000, the largest single gift ever made to the Society by a living donor. He was a constant donor to the Library, his most important single gift being his remarkable set of eighteenth century New Hampshire laws and legislative journals. He was a conscientious attendant at the meetings and in October 1921 read a paper on "The Making of the Republic of Vermont, the Fourteenth State."

Mr. Wilbur was interested in several historical societies. He was a member of the Massachusetts Historical Society and the Colonial Society of Massachusetts; he was a member and also on the governing boards of the Vermont Historical Society and the New York Historical Society, to which two last societies he bequeathed \$100,000 each. He was an active working force for improvement of conditions in every organization with which he was connected. His energy was unbounded and his suggestions constructive. Few persons of wealth in recent years have shown a greater interest in historical societies and in methods of historical research than Mr. Wilbur. He had large means, with which he accomplished something of permanent service to American scholarship.

C. S. B.

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