

GIDEON SPRAGUE IVES¹

On January 19, 1846, Gideon Sprague Ives was born at Dickinson, Franklin County, New York. His father was Warren Ives of Claremont, New Hampshire, and his mother Elizabeth Ladd, a native of Vermont. Both parents were descendants of early pioneer American families. William Ives, a direct ancestor, came over from England in the "True Love" in 1636 and settled in Boston. Before the Revolutionary War his relative, Joseph Ives, had settled in Claremont, New Hampshire, and later he served with the minute men as a lieutenant.

From Dickinson Mr. Ives, the youngest of six brothers, removed with his parents to Potsdam, St. Lawrence County, New York, where he resided until September, 1864. In that month, when he was about eighteen years of age, he enlisted in the Fiftieth New York Volunteer Infantry; later he was transferred to the Fifteenth regiment, in which he served until the end of the Civil War. When he was discharged on June 13, 1865, he had the pleasure of being in the grand review at Washington at the close of the war.

After his military career was ended, Mr. Ives resumed his education at St. Lawrence and Lawrenceville academies at Potsdam and Lawrenceville, New York. In 1869 he entered the University of Michigan and from the law department of that institution he was graduated in April, 1871. In the same year, after having been admitted to the bar by the supreme court of Michigan, he went west and settled in St. Peter, Minnesota. He soon became a prominent man in this pioneer country, and was elected to the positions of city attorney and mayor of St. Peter and county attorney of Nicollet County. At the general election of 1886 he was elected state senator

¹ A memorial read on January 21 at the eightieth annual meeting of the Minnesota Historical Society. *Ed.*

on the Republican ticket from his district, an office that he held for four years; and at the state election of 1890 he was elected lieutenant governor on the ticket with Governor Merriam.

During the sessions of the legislature of 1887 and 1889 he was a leader, taking an active part in all important legislation. He led the land grant fight against the Duluth and Iron Range Railroad and the struggle to save the university from division when a bill was introduced for the separation of the agricultural college from the university proper. President Cyrus Northrop gave Mr. Ives the credit for defeating this bill. He also took a leading part in the campaign in the legislature for the high license law, which represented the first real effort of this state to control the liquor traffic. The session of 1891 was a stormy one, for the legislature was controlled by Democrats and Populists, while the governor and Lieutenant Governor Ives were Republicans. The latter won much favorable press comment during the session for his handling of controversies with the political leaders of the opposing parties. He was a candidate for the nomination for governor on the Republican ticket in 1892, but was defeated by Knute Nelson. In 1901 he was appointed by Governor Van Sant chairman of the first state tax commission, which drew up the new tax code that was finished and adopted in 1902.

While Mr. Ives's active military career came to an end in June, 1865, he continued to be greatly interested in the men who had participated in the Civil War, as well as in the descendants of those who had taken part in the Revolutionary War. He was a member of the Sons of the American Revolution and during the whole latter part of his life was an ardent and prominent member of the Grand Army of the Republic. Not many years prior to his death he was department commander for Minnesota; he also held other offices in that organization.

But his activities in civil life as distinguished from his military or political life constitute an important contribution to

human progress. He was an ardent adherent to the Masonic Order in this state and held distinguished offices in this organization. In 1905 he exercised his energies in the establishment of the Minnesota Masonic Home near Savage, and up to the time of his death he continued to render valuable services in the promotion of its functions. In 1881 he was elected grand master of the Grand Lodge of Odd Fellows of Minnesota, and he was largely instrumental in the establishment of an Odd Fellows' home at Northfield. This and the Masonic home are monuments to his efforts and constitute no insignificant benefaction to the people of the state.

During the last twenty years of his life Mr. Ives was an active and efficient member of the Minnesota Historical Society. He was for many years a member of its executive council and from 1918 to 1921 its president. But perhaps he rendered the most valuable services to this organization during the interval between 1911 and 1915. This was the period when the society, its patrons, and members became greatly absorbed in the problem of getting a new building for the housing of the library, museum, and manuscript collection of the institution. From the time of its organization in 1849 until its present building was completed, its valuable collections had been lodged in basements and other places in the Old and the New Capitol, places that were more or less inaccessible to those interested in this material. Now it was proposed to construct a suitable library building on the Capitol grounds. A "special committee on legislation" was appointed by the president of the society on May 13, 1912, for the purpose of "securing a Historical Library Building"; it consisted of five members, with Mr. Ives as chairman. In order to bring the matter before the legislature of 1913 the members of the committee decided to "associate with themselves a general Committee of One Hundred Members, to be appointed for the various counties in the state." At a meeting held in Minneapolis on November 22, 1912, the committee organized and elected Mr. Ives as its chairman. This

group of a hundred constituents of the members of the 1913 legislature did much to secure the favorable action of their representatives, and in that year a law was passed authorizing the erection of an historical building and appropriating five hundred thousand dollars for the purpose.

Mr. Ives also was a member of a "Special Committee for the Library Building," which was appointed in May, 1913. This committee did much of its work in conjunction with the state board of control, the functions of which included the securing of grounds for public buildings and the control of the construction of such buildings. A parcel of land lying north of the Capitol, called the Merriam site, was first selected and in fact bought for the proposed building, and the Old Capitol site was suggested by many interested parties. After much dispute and the expending of much time and labor by the members of the building committee and others, the Lamprey site, situated immediately east of the Capitol square, was selected as the most desirable location for the building. By the terms of the original law the supreme court was to have quarters in the Historical Building, but this clause was amended by the 1915 legislature to read "that any part of said building not in use or actually needed for purposes of said society may be used for other state purposes under the direction of the Governor." The enactment of this amendment was secured through the great efforts of Mr. Ives and his committee on legislation.

In 1903 Mr. Ives removed to St. Paul, where he continued the practice of law. He was appointed a referee in bankruptcy in 1909 and held the position until his death on December 20, 1927. He was married in 1878 to Mary E. Swift, the daughter of Henry A. Swift, who was the third governor of the state of Minnesota. She died in March, 1926. Two sons survive their parents, Henry Swift Ives and Warren G. Ives, both well known and of good repute. During the residence of the family in St. Paul its members belonged to the House of Hope

Presbyterian Church. Mr. Ives was an ardent sportsman and found much recreation in hunting and fishing. The lures of society did not attract him, but he had a large number of friends and was happy in his social intercourse with them. He was a student of good literature and enjoyed his library.

This brief history of Mr. Ives's life discloses that he was of a type that calls for admiration and respect. His origin, his antecedents, his character and traditions place him in a class with the men who made the earliest settlements in this country; who fought in the bloody wars with the French and Indians, the American Revolution, and the Civil War; and who formulated that amazing document, the Constitution of the United States. They were the men who founded and promulgated American democracy. The Minnesota Historical Society is glad to pay tribute to his memory.

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