

The Wadsworths of the Genesee Valley

A Famous Old American Family Distinguished In War, Politics and Agriculture For Several Generations



James Wadsworth.

CONGRESSMAN JAMES W. WADSWORTH, who has recently been involved in a spirited controversy over the meat inspection bill with President Roosevelt, is the head of a family which is about the nearest approach to the British landed gentry that can be found in republican America. There are several families in the Genesee valley that have made that beautiful section of the Empire State their habitation for more than a century, and among them all the Wadsworths are the oldest and most distinguished. These "old settlers" form a social colony to be compared in exclusiveness and culture with nothing else in the state, even though it were the rarefied atmosphere of Washington square.

All of the Wadsworths have figured prominently in agriculture, politics and war. The first native born American of the name, James Wadsworth, of Durham, Conn., became a member of the committee of safety at the breaking out of the Revolutionary war. When the Declaration of Independence was made public he was colonel and brigadier general of Connecticut militia, and in the following year he was appointed second major general and was ordered to New Haven to defend the towns along the coast.

This James Wadsworth must have been a man of parts. After peace was signed he became justice of the New Haven county court of common pleas and was a delegate from Connecticut to the congress. When he died, in 1817, he had been a member of the executive council for five years. He was a bachelor, but he had a nephew, another James, who had been graduated from Yale in 1787 and in 1790 had been seized with the western fever and had emigrated to the Genesee river country.

He purchased a large tract of land in what is now the township of Genesee and soon became one of the richest landed proprietors in the state. This second James Wadsworth was a philanthropist. It was one of his most cherished theories that education was a panacea for social ills of every description. At his personal expense he established and maintained numerous

Scruples of One Juror.

A group of eminent southern lawyers occupied chairs in the Raleigh, and it was worth any man's while to hear their stories of courthouse episodes in Dixie. After Col. John Allen and Judge Charles Stuart, of Muscogee, and Ed. Edward L. Russell, of Mobile had each narrated some funny yarns, Judge "Jim" Melville of Gulfport, Miss., one of the most successful lawyers of his state, recounted this one:

"Some years ago while I was on the bench there came up for trial a murder case of more than usual interest. A great deal of difficulty was had in trying to get a jury, man after man being told to stand aside mainly for the reason that he had already formed an opinion or that he was opposed to the infliction of capital punishment. So many of them made this last an excuse that I got a trifle irritated and came to the conclusion that it was merely a dodge to avoid jury service. Finally a long, lank specimen of a countryman was called upon for examination as to his fitness as a juror. When asked the regulation questions he replied that he was opposed to capital punishment. Looking at him sternly and in tones somewhat suggestive of wrath, I asked the fellow if he did not think there were conditions so extraordinary as to warrant the hanging of the offender. He said he did not believe anything could make him assent to such a verdict, and I impatiently waved him aside and called for a new man.

"But will your honor let me ex-

plain" said the disqualifying citizen. "I'd like to give the court my reasons."

"I don't wish to hear any explanation from you. Go and set down."

"Excuse me, judge, but you must hear my reason."

"Well, then, give it and go along with you."

"The reason I am opposed to capital punishment, your honor, is that my old mammy taught me it was a sin to kill anything that wasn't fit to eat."

"—Washington Post.

Too Much to Ask of Him.

"During the last national campaign," said Secretary Shaw, "an eloquent orator was urging the people in one of the southern cities to support the Democratic ticket. Henry Gasaway Davis, who was over 80 years old, was considered a poor candidate, and many of the spellbinders believed that the presence of Davis on the ticket weakened it. The orator was trying to overcome the de-

fect in the ticket by urging the young men to support Davis, who, although an octogenarian, was still a man of ability and would live out his term, with good luck.

"One of the auditors, who had drunk more than his allowance of red eye, almost broke up the meeting by exclaiming: 'I am a pretty good Democrat, but I can't vote for an octogenarian, as no member of my family has yet voted for a man with nigger blood in his veins, and I'm not going to do it now.'"

"—New York World.

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Young Wadsworth was graduated from Yale in 1898. Still continuing in the footsteps of his ancestors, he went into the Spanish war, which was just then on hand. His campaign in Porto Rico was not sufficiently realistic to satisfy him and he re-enlisted for service in the Philippines. Here he earned a slight promotion from the ranks, being made civilian orderly, a sort of chief clerk to the general commanding one of the departments of the islands. It is recorded that he worked faithfully and did his work well. As an enlisted man he had to wear a uniform; could not fraternize with commissioned officers, although superior to most of them in wealth and social standing.

After almost two years of this sort of experience he returned to the Genesee valley and settled down to learn the practical part of farming. When he married Alice Hay, the second daughter of the late secretary of state, his father gave him a farm of 1,100 acres and built on it a handsome house in colonial style. Although there is but faint suggestion of the youthful prodigy inspired by young Mr. Wadsworth, there is a good deal that is fascinating about his personality. It won President Roosevelt and Governor Higgins, neither of whom is likely to be utterly mistaken in his estimate of a new man.</