MEMORIAL ADDRESSES IN HONOR OF GENERAL JOHN B. SANBORN

(1826 – 1904)

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A revolutionary war raises many strange characters out of the obscurity which is the common lot of humble lives in an undisturbed state of society.

Certain individualities grow into fame through their vices and their virtues, or simply by their actions, which may have a temporary importance; and then they become forgotten. The names of a few leaders alone survive the end of armed strife and are further preserved in history; so that, vanishing from men's active memories, they still exist in books.

The name of General Santierra attained that cold paper-and-ink immortality.[1]

These lines, which begin a short story by Joseph Conrad, also apply to John Benjamin Sanborn, a general officer of the Union Army, whose "immortality," once preserved in "cold paper-and-ink" books on library shelves, is now secured in articles and books on the internet.

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[1] **"Gaspar Ruiz" in Joseph Conrad's *A Set of Six* (1915)**

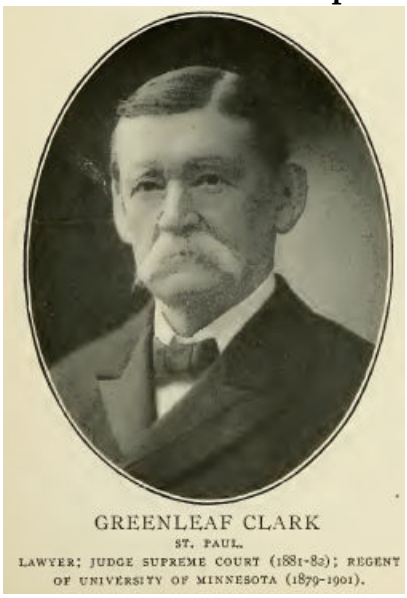
MEMORIAL ADDRESSES IN HONOR OF GENERAL JOHN B. SANBORN, AT THE MONTHLY COUNCIL MEETING OF THE MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCITY, IN THE STATE CAPITOL, ST. PAUL, MINN, MONDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 10, 1904.

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

BY

THE PRESIDENT,
HON. GREENLEAF CLARK.

The charter of the Historical Society ordains that one of its objects, among others, shall be "to rescue from oblivion the memory of the early pioneers and to obtain and preserve narratives of their exploits, perils and hardy adventures." It is well. The lives of prominent and leading men are so connected with the important events of the past, that they portray in vivid reality the processes by which those events were brought about. An impersonal history could hardly be written, and if it could, it would lack the element which gives it life and vigor and confidence in its truth. The subject remaining for consideration at this session is the life and influence of John Benjamin Sanborn, who died in St. Paul on the 16th day of May, 1904.


GREENLEAF CLARK
ST. PAUL.
LAWYER; JUDGE SUPREME COURT (1881-82); REGENT OF UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA (1879-1901).

General Sanborn was a member of this Society for forty-eight years, a member of its Executive Council for twenty-eight years, an officer of it for thirteen years, and he was its president when he died. His contributions to its literature

comprise many articles of historical value, and its treasures have been enriched by his bounty. From the time he became a member of its Executive Council to the day of his death, no man was more constant than he in attendance upon its meetings, or more devoted to its work; and no one engaged more freely in its discussions upon incidents of the past. He had lived in the sphere of human activities, had a retentive memory, and helped to elucidate events around which the gloom of time was settling. His last labors were for this Society. Less than three months before he died, he prepared a paper on "The Work of the Second Legislature of Minnesota, 1859-60," which was read before the Council at its session of March 14, 1904, he, though present, not being able to read it.

The record of our obituaries shows how rapidly the old pioneers, those who came down to us from Territorial and ante-Territorial days, are passing away. We are upon the verge of a new epoch. The period of construction is fast giving away to that of conservation. The light of the faces of the old pioneers is fading into shadow, their companionship is passing from a reality to a memory. A few old Romans are left to us, most of whom are peacefully and gracefully bearing the burden of years. To spare them, one by one, will be a reiterated sorrow.

I cannot refrain from saying that no border country was ever ushered into the light of formal and salutary social order by a body of men more judicious, courageous, or possessing higher qualities of manliness and refinement, than are to be found among the leading spirits of the old pioneers of Minnesota. If there be any who think that contact with primeval things dulls the sensibilities or debases the character, to refute such contention, we have only to point to the innate and never failing courtesy, kindliness, hospitality, refinement and gentility of the leading pioneers, both men and women, who ushered into life the State of Minnesota.

John B. Sanborn was a prominent man in the city of his adoption, and in the Territory and State for half a century. I knew him in his native State of New Hampshire, and when I came to St. Paul, a few months after the admission of the State to the Union, I found him, so soon, at the head of one of the leading law firms of the city. From that time to the day of his death his name stood at the head of a prominent firm of lawyers. His professional career was subject to many interruptions, and though other and important work was given him to do, the law was his chosen profession.

I should say that his most prominent and distinguished gift, as a lawyer, was his ability of bringing men who started out with litigious intentions together, and by his good sense and practical sagacity effecting a settlement, satisfactory to both.

There is no more valuable service a lawyer can render a client than this. In matters which involved doubtful legal questions, or where the facts were unsolved, or for any other reason resort to a trial in court became necessary, he demonstrated in public the same ability to fight, as he exercised in private to conciliate; but the contest was courteous, though it might be strenuous.

Mr. Sanborn acted a prominent part in the framing of the laws of the State. He was a member of the famous legislature of 1859, whose wise and judicious work in planting the new state government on solid ground, and in throwing safeguards around its vital interests, is universally recognized; and, as chairman of the judiciary committee of the House of Representatives, he took a leading part in that legislation. He repeatedly afterward served in the House and Senate. When someone was wanted to represent with ability and fidelity the interests of the city and State, his neighbors repeatedly turned to him, and though he was a Republican in politics and lived in a city of Democratic proclivities, I do not remember that he was ever defeated at the polls. By this service he became

identified with much of the important legislation of the State.

In civic life there was no one more ready than he to lend a hand. He was never too busy or too tired to take vigorous hold of matters important to the welfare of the community. He did not need urging. He saw the need or danger, and readily and cheerfully co-operated with his neighbors in devising and executing measures to supply the one, or to avert the other. He was always a busy man. I do not think he knew what idleness was. Blessed by nature with a vigorous constitution, he hardly realized the necessity of rest and recuperation, either by himself or others.

When the nation's life was threatened, he laid down the arts of peace and took up the business of war. His first military work was the organization of troops as Adjutant General of the State; his later service was in executing war in the field. He served in the War of the Rebellion as commander of a regiment, a brigade, and a division, under the eye of a superior officer, and in independent command. In a service of four years, he rose from the rank of a colonel of volunteers to that of brigadier general and brevet major general. He always met the demands upon him. In sudden emergencies, whether arising in subordinate or independent command, in the field of battle, or in strategic movements, he was always equal to the occasion; he took without shrinking the responsibility of prompt decision and decisive action; and what he did never failed to meet the approval of his superiors.

In his social life he was always the courteous gentleman, kind, considerate, composed, free from the perturbations of anger or fear, just, and benevolent almost to a fault.

General Sanborn was an all round man. His influence was exerted and felt in many directions. He was prominent in professional, public, civic, and military life, a career that falls to the lot of but few men. It is hardly to be expected that a man whose field of activity is so broad and

diversified should be preeminent in any particular line. There is a limit to the human powers. But I should say that the highest and most incontestable claim of General Sanborn for distinction was his ability, bearing and accomplishments as a soldier.

Was it a useful life? The greatest of the English poets and dramatists, that great analyst of the human mind and character, that great estimator of human values, said, "Every man is worth just so much as the things are worth about which he busies himself;" and it takes but a superficial knowledge of the great poet, who taught by the vivid painting of contrasts as well as by precept, to realize that, in his great mind, the worthiest things *or a man to do are those which promote the well being of mankind, and which dignify and ennoble human nature. Try General Sanborn by this high standard. The things about which he busied himself, in a long, busy, influential and eventful life, were important to society, the State, and his country. If he ever condescended to an ignoble act, I know it not. What better title to respect, honor, and commemoration, can any man achieve?

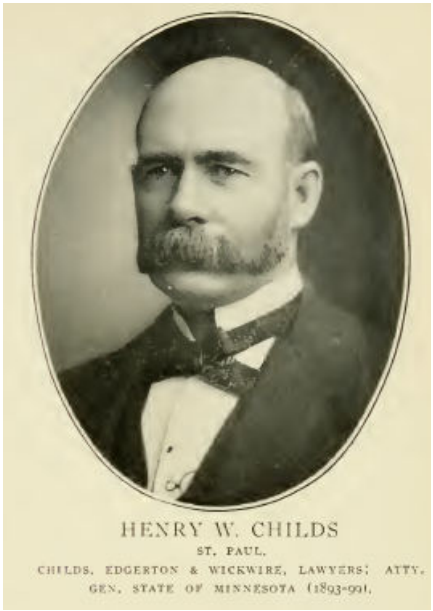
General Sanborn was a man of strong religious conviction. He was always a firm supporter of the Christian Church. Up to the time of his death, he not only cheerfully contributed to the support of a prominent church in the city from his means, but gave the management of its temporal affairs the benefit of his business ability. He was not ostentatious or obtrusive in matters of religion or morals. He taught by example rather than by precept. After he knew that his work was done and that he had but a short time to stay, he said his life had been a happy one, that he had tried to do the best his could, that his life had already been prolonged beyond the allotted age, and that he was reconciled to the will of God. And when the summons of the great Master came, like a good soldier he answered, "Ready"; and in peace and serenity, and with hope and trust in the mercies of God, he laid down his mortal life and passed to his reward.

In order that the record of the life of such a man may be preserved, with circumstance, event, and elucidation, and that due honor may be done to his memory, I have the honor of presenting to you the Hon. Henry W. Childs, the orator of the occasion, who will address us upon the life and influence of John B. Sanborn.

THE LIFE AND WORK OF GENERAL SANBORN.

BY
GEN. HENRY W. CHILDS.

"All history," says Emerson, "resolves itself very easily into the biography of a few stout and earnest persons." The history of New England is the biography of the "stout and earnest persons" who, in senate chamber and pulpit, on rostrum and battlefield, with pen and sword and voice, have fought for truth and justice. They are her household names. They live in her family trees and upon her tablets. In no other section of our country has there been a more complete blending of public and family history than in New England; nowhere else has there prevailed a truer conception of personal rights, or a greater tenacity for their preservation.


HENRY W. CHILDS
ST. PAUL.
CHILDS, EDGERTON & WICKWIRE, LAWYERS; ATTY. GEN. STATE OF MINNESOTA (1893-99).

Life was ever serious to the New Englander. A sense of responsibility weighed heavily upon him; duty called to him not in vain; deep earnestness moved him. The poverty of the soil which he tilled, and the rigors of the climate in which he lived, exacted labor and taught the lessons of thrift and economy. Out of the hard conditions of New England life, came forth a race of giants. Big-brained and strong-limbed, they have expounded constitutions, sung immortal songs, occupied the high seats of learning, commanded armies, felled forests, and founded cities.

It is said that between the landing of the Pilgrims and the uprising against Charles I, twenty thousand emigrants came from Old England to New England. All came for conscience' sake. Among them were William Sanborn, for several years selectman of his town and a soldier in King Philip's War, and William Sargent, the former arriving in 1632, the latter in 1638. From these two immigrants flows the American ancestry of our subject. No character appears in either ancestral line which attained conspicuous eminence. "There seems to be," said General Sanborn, "so far as I am able to learn, nothing striking, except their regular, orderly life, and freedom from all crimes and offenses." Such language implies nothing of discredit and would be equally applicable to the ancestry of many a distinguished American. On the paternal side, a great-grandfather, and, on the maternal side, a grandfather, served in the patriot army in the war of the Revolution, the latter for six years, embracing the historic winter at Valley Forge.

John Benjamin Sanborn was born at Epsom, New Hampshire, December 5th, 1826, on the family homestead which, in his own words, had "descended by primogeniture from generation to generation since 1750." The old homestead, it is worthy of remark, still remains in the possession of the descendants of his father, thus showing an unbroken ownership by the Sanborns from a date almost contemporaneous with the birth of Washington. This fact, most exceptional in American-life, is an eloquent tribute to a beautiful family sentiment.

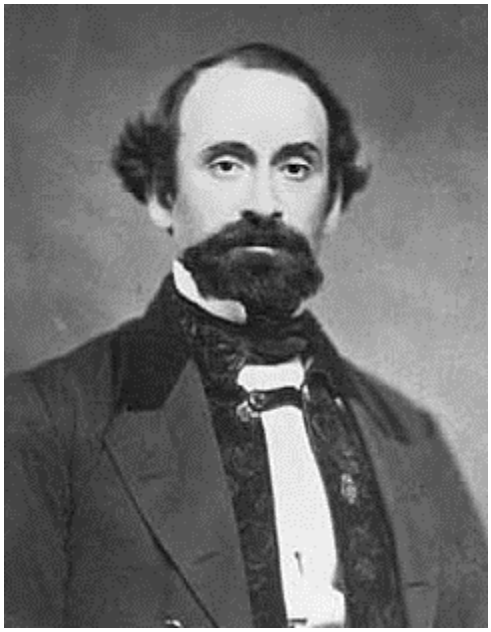
General Sanborn was the youngest of a family of five children born of the wedlock of Frederick Sanborn and Lucy L. Sargent. His early life was spent upon his father's farm, and, until he was well on in his teens, he intended to follow his father's vocation. "It was my purpose," he informs us, "up to the time that I was' sixteen years of age, to remain at home and take charge of the homestead in Epsom and care for my parents through their old age; but the failure of the health of my brother, Henry F. Sanborn,

during his senior year in college, changed this plan." That the lad was not swift in seeking an- other vocation or eager to win the bays of scholarship, may justly be inferred; for, although his mother earnestly urged him to his books, he lingered on the farm until he had reached the age of twenty-three. He then determined to prepare for the legal profession, and, accordingly, fitted himself for college at Pembroke Academy, New Hampshire, and Thetford Academy, Vermont, and entered Dartmouth College in the fall of 1851, at the age of twenty-five. Aroused, perhaps, by a consciousness of fleeting years and the importance of an immediate devotion to the study of his chosen profession, he severed his relations with Dartmouth, as a student, at the close of his first term, and, in the following spring, entered the law office of Asa Fowler, Esq., at Concord, New Hampshire. His association with Judge Fowler was of good omen. That gentleman then stood high at the bar of his state and was subsequently elevated to a place upon the bench, a mark of great distinction in a state where the judicial office is a testimonial of high professional and personal qualification. Whatever may be said of the advantages of the law school, it can never supply to a brainy young man the intellectual stimulus derived from a course of study pursued in the office of a strong lawyer. He is a daily inspiration to a gifted youth. General Sanborn was no ordinary student, and his instructor was no ordinary lawyer. Two bright, noble minds were for a period of two years, and until separated by the ad- mission of the student to the bar in the month of July, 1854, thus brought into almost daily contact.

Let us pause for a moment to take a mental view of our lamented president when, fifty years ago, he had received from the Superior Court of New Hampshire a certificate of qualification authorizing him to practice before the courts of that state. He is within a few months of twenty-eight years of age. His carriage is erect and noble; his frame, if not stalwart, is yet strongly built and well proportioned. A large and well-formed head is covered with an abundance of dark hair. His face is strong and manly, his voice rich

and pleasing, and he meets your gaze with an eye full, dark, keen, and thoughtful. There is un-mistakably the happy unison of healthy brain and body, the richest legacies youth can enjoy. There is, indeed, a man, self-poised, firm-footed, "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." New England has sent forth more gifted sons, but none truer; none better fitted to fill the breach or face the storm. He bore in the cells of his blood a pledge of loyalty to New England traditions; and in a half century of subsequent life, filled with affairs, he was never faithless to that pledge.

With rare exceptions, it is a trying moment with a young lawyer when he comes to select the field where the professional blade is to be drawn and life's work performed; and our subject was no exception. Almost immediately upon his admission to the bar, he opened an office at Concord, New Hampshire; and a few months later he formed the acquaintance of Theodore French, Esq., of Concord, who had but recently completed a course of law at Cambridge. Already both young men had been casting glances toward that great, undeveloped domain, rapidly coming into public notice, lying west of the Mississippi.



"It was concluded by both of us," he again informs us, "that we ought to leave New England and settle somewhere in the Northwest." Having formed this resolution, it was their good fortune soon to meet Mr. Paul R. George, who had but recently visited St. Paul. His description of the territory of Minnesota was warm and persuasive. St. Paul

was, in his opinion, defined to become a great city. The die was then cast; and the twain, late in November, 1854, visited Boston, where a few hundred dollars were invested in law books, whereupon they started on their westward journey, reaching St. Paul in the month of December, 1854.

On the first day of January, 1855, the two young men opened a law office at St. Paul for the practice of their profession. The first public announcement of this new accession to the bar of the Territory appeared in the columns of the Daily Pioneer, under date of January I5th, 1855, in the following notice:

> **SANBORN & FRENCH,**
> **ATTORNEYS AND COUNSELORS AT LAW,**
> **Commissioners for New England States.**
> **Office in the "Rice House,"**
> **St. Anthony street.**
>
> **JOHN E. SANBORN. THEODORE FRENCH.**

Then, for the first time, appeared in the public press of Minnesota a name which was destined, in the course of years, to gain a high place in the public thought, and to live forever in the history of a great commonwealth, and in the records of one of the world's greatest wars.

The new firm found a bar of great promise already formed in this remote field, which grew apace in strength and numbers within the next few years. The first few volumes of the official reports of the Supreme Court of this State, particularly the first and second, will ever have an increasing historic interest, far surpassing that which shall attach to the judicial opinions therein recorded, whatever their merit; for they will constitute a perpetual record and testimonial of the bright intellects which illumined both bench and bar at the beginning of our history. It is, perhaps, just to say that no state was ever favored at its' birth with a bar of superior worth.

The name of John B. Sanborn appears as one of the attorneys in four of the causes presented to the Supreme Court in 1858. Thenceforward for more than four decades, excepting the period he was engaged in the military service of his country, his name is frequently met in the files of causes tried in the state and federal courts.

It is almost trite to say that Minnesota was fortunate in the character of the men who shaped her policies during her early development. To whatever cause it be ascribed, the fact remains that a class of remarkable mien gathered here to perform the various tasks incident to the creation of a new state. But the cause is not obscure. It required no seer fifty years ago to foretell somewhat of that which civilization would speedily achieve here. There was then rich promise here in the undisturbed wealth of mine, forest, and prairie. There was captivating beauty then in the garb with which nature had here bedecked herself. There were then uncomputed possibilities in energy of waterfall. Then, as now, there was unexcelled salubrity of climate; and, with all, a manifest advantage of situation. Whoever came felt, as did Mr. George, the impress of the greatness of an unborn future. Long before Proctor Knott had convulsed his countrymen with a speech as marked with slander as with wit, truer men than he had, after painstaking research, called attention to the rich domain which awaited here the advent of the forces of civilized life. "The sun shines not upon a fairer region," wrote, in 1850, that faithful witness, General Sibley, "one more desirable as a home for the mechanic, the farmer, and the laborer, or where their industry will be more surely requited, than Minnesota Territory." Here were the conditions which appealed to adventurous youth and early manhood, those who face the dawn. There was enough of doubt and danger to repel the weak and timid and attract the strong and brave. The treaty of 1851 had opened the gates, and soon the tide of immigration was pouring through. It brought some who were fresh from the schools and the refining influences of the best of eastern homes. Stirred by the novelty of their environment, and evincing

that same generous and ambitious spirit which has ever prompted American youth, they labored with tireless industry and great ability upon the foundations of the Commonwealth.

When General Sanborn arrived in the Territory, much had already been done; but the far greater labor was yet ahead, and, happily, the workmen were in the field, or soon to be there with thought and energy commensurate with the task.

It required effort to secure from a reluctant Congress an act authorizing the gathering people to clothe themselves in sovereign power. Then came the study and debate incident to the framing of a constitution. A system of legislation had to be enacted suitable to local government. A wilderness had to be pierced with highways, not only to bring together scattered com- munities but also to secure relations with the markets of the East. These and many other subjects, public and private, engaged the thought and enlisted the energies of the enterprising young men who were then upon the scene. Little, far too little, has been preserved to us of the forensic efforts of that intensely interesting period of our history.

Many a stirring appeal which we would now gladly possess lives only in the fading memories of the favored few who are fast entering into the shadow of the grave.

General Sanborn had passed six years upon that eventful stage before he received the call to lay aside the lawyer's brief and take his place in the red fringe of battle. They had been to him years of great civic as well as professional profit. In that brief period he had impressed himself upon his fellow citizens as a coming man.

The more the question is examined, the stronger will the conviction grow that the legislature which convened in this state in 1860, if ever equalled, has never been surpassed by any later one, either as to the nature or the

comprehensiveness of the work accomplished. Fortunate in the character of the men who composed it, that legislature framed many measures which have a durable place in the system of laws by which we are governed. Not that they have not undergone or shall not undergo modification, but that their general structure, which has survived the furnace heat of the past forty-four years, will commend itself to the wisdom of the future.

As chairman of the judiciary committee of the lower house during that session, General Sanborn occupied a position of exceptional responsibility. His selection for the place from among the able lawyers who composed that body, some of whom have since won great distinction in public and private walks, was a marked expression of the respect in which he was then held both as a citizen and as a lawyer. Another circumstance is far too expressive of the public esteem which he had acquired in those early days to be now passed in silence. In the Republican caucus, held in 1860, to make choice of a candidate for the office of United States Senator, he lacked but two votes of receiving the great honor which was conferred upon the late Hon. Morton S. Wilkinson. Every man can trace to some seemingly trivial circumstance an opportunity seized or lost his prosperous or failing fortunes; but not often are we presented with an occasion in human life which, viewed in the light of subsequent events, demonstrates more clearly how slender maybe the thread, at times, on which a great career depends.

None of the war governors excelled our own lamented Ramsey either in patriotic spirit or the promptitude with which he executed measures in support of the National Government. No subject lay closer to his heart than the organization of troops for military service. Rarely at fault in his choice of men for public station, he was too wise to err in the selection of an officer who would sustain to him so close a relationship as that of his Adjutant General. When the gallant William H. Acker resigned the office of Adjutant General, April 24, 1861, General Sanborn was

appointed to succeed him. No wiser choice was, perhaps, possible. His administration of the office bespeaks the faithful public servant. During his brief incumbency, which ended January 1, 1862, four regiments of infantry, two batteries of artillery, and four squadrons of cavalry, were organized for military service.

But it was for him to lead rather than muster troops. Prior to his retirement from the last named office, and on November 5, 1861, he had been commissioned and mustered in as Colonel of the Fourth Regiment of Minnesota Volunteers. He assumed its command January 1, 1862. His entrance into military life was the beginning of a career which, tested either by the nature of the duty or the ability displayed in its discharge, constitutes his chief work, and entitles him to a permanent place in the history of his country.

The best panegyric upon the military services of General Sanborn are the rank he attained, the magnitude of the work to which he was assigned, and the generous and unstudied testimonials of his companions in arms. He was cool and stead- fast in the face of danger, wise in council, and never received a promotion which was not fairly earned.

We begin our brief review of his active military service when, in the early summer of 1862, his regiment had become identified with the army of the Mississippi at Corinth. The magnificent display of Union forces, aggregating one hundred and fifty thousand men, which had then gathered in front of that stronghold, appealed to the patriotic sentiments of the young colonel, who, speaking of it years afterward, declared that it "struck the mind with amazement and led to the conviction that a government that could thus raise and organize armies, could not be torn to pieces or conquered, either by covert foes or organized revolution," It was at Luka, where he commanded a brigade, that he first faced the storm of battle and where he played his first brilliant part.

Confronted with greatly superior numbers, his command there repeatedly repelled the assaults of the enemy. In an action lasting less than two hours, more than twenty-five per cent, of his followers were killed or wounded. The gallantry displayed by him in that engagement drew from General Hamilton, his division commander, the following generous tribute:

> **"To Col. J. B. Sanborn, who, in this his first battle, exhibited a coolness and bravery under fire worthy a veteran, I am greatly indebted;" and he cordially commended him "to the favorable notice of the Government."**

A few days later, at the battle of Corinth, he acted with equal ability and courage. Ordered to dislodge the enemy from a well chosen position, his command, with great coolness and precision, changed front under heavy fire, and charged with such effect that the enemy was put to flight. General Buford, in his report of the battle, expressed the opinion that the dislodgment of the enemy was "absolutely necessary," and that "it was done by Colonel Sanborn, commanding- the Fourth Minnesota, most gallantly."

His services at the battles of Luka and Corinth fairly entitled him to immediate promotion. So thought his division commander, who warmly recommended it; and so thought General Grant, whose powerful endorsement it received. Lincoln was not slow to act, and as early as December, 1862, appointed him to the rank of brigadier general. Confirmation of the appointment, retarded perhaps by local political influences, was unjustly delayed until the following session of Congress. Stung by a sense of the ingratitude implied by the delay, General Sanborn, early in August, 1863, tendered his resignation, which had the salutary effect of silencing opposition to his confirmation, which soon followed, and, so far as possible, repaired the wrong which had been inflicted; but the loss of relative rank, carrying with it a loss of military prestige

in the army in which he had theretofore performed so useful a part, was an inevitable consequence.

Aside from the engagements above noted, he saw much of active service throughout the period of his connection with the Army of the Mississippi. In many of that series of engagements, culminating in the capitulation of Vicksburg, he held important commands. He did good work at Raymond; made a brilliant and effective charge at Jackson; fought splendidly at Champion's Hill; held his command for hours in the dead space, under the enemy's works, in the fruitless assault upon Vicksburg; and his was the honor of being one of the two brigade commanders designated to occupy Vicksburg on the 4th of July, 1863, when that stronghold was surrendered.

It was the ambition of General Sanborn to continue in service under the immediate leadership of the great soldier whose military genius had displayed itself in brilliant light at Vicksburg. He not only admired the chieftain, but he loved the man. He had enjoyed his companionship in the camp, witnessed his marvelous self-control when battle raged, and won laurels in the execution of his commands. Twenty-two years afterward, when the ardor of youth had been chastened by ripened judgment, he paid to his illustrious commander the following tribute: "Considering his character with reference particularly to his military achievements, he stands before the world greater than Alexander, greater than Caesar, greater than Napoleon, and of equal greatness with Wellington."

It was a great disappointment, therefore, when, in the month of October, 1863, he was ordered to report to General Schofield at St. Louis. He was not ignorant of the fact that it had long been remarked in army circles that "the Department of the Missouri was the graveyard of military reputations." Though the new field might afford abundant employment, he did not doubt that the theater of the great events of the war would thereafter be to the east rather than to the west of the Mississippi. Viewing the

subject in the calm retrospect of today, enlightened by the record of his labors in the new field, so varied, perplexing, and important, yet always well discharged, it may be doubted whether any other field would have developed in him greater powers of usefulness to his country.

Missouri had been from the outset a hotbed of contentious factions. Saved from secession only by the dauntless efforts of her loyal forces under the leadership of her valiant [General Nathaniel] Lyon, her territory had been swept by invading hosts, her communities terrorized by armed marauders, and her soil frequently drenched with the blood of her own sons, in conflicts in which they were arrayed one against the other. The patriotic men of that state had doubtless always been in the ascendant; but she had few, if any, communities in which neighbor was not bitterly hostile to neighbor. And this was particularly true of southwestern Missouri, embraced within the military district to which General Sanborn was assigned.

When he reported to General Schofield in October, 1863, there was no organized rebel force in the state; and yet he was confronted with war in its most horrible aspects. His district was everywhere infested with bushwhackers who butchered their captives with inhuman atrocity. To pacify a country so disturbed, was a herculean task; but his prompt and vigorous measures were to prove sufficient to it.

The invasion of the state in the fall of 1864 by a large cavalry force of Confederates under General Price gave General Sanborn an opportunity to display again his qualities as a commanding officer in the field. During the month of October of that year, frequent battles were waged with the invading force in which he participated. He fought and repulsed the enemy at Jefferson City and at Boonville; led the advance at Independence, where his cavalry made an intrepid sabre charge; did effective work at Mine Creek, where, by the persistency of his efforts, he prevented the escape of the enemy unpunished. At

Newtonia he fought so well as to draw from; Greeley, in his History of the War, this spirited passage: "Belmont, with his Kansas men and Benteen's brigade, followed by Sanborn, kept the trail of the flying foe; striking them at Newtonia, near the southwest corner of the state, and, being outnumbered, was evidently getting worsted, when Sanborn who had marched one hundred and two miles in thirty-six hours came up, and changed the fortunes of the day. ... So ended the last Rebel invasion of Missouri." And so ended the last battle in which our subject participated.

No ingenuous reader can carefully peruse the military record of General Sanborn without admiration for his qualities as a soldier. He was a successful commander. Engaged in "twenty sieges, battles, and affairs," his command never failed to execute an order, "was never driven from its position, never pursued by the enemy," and never suffered the loss by capture of a single sound soldier. This is a remarkable statement, substantially in language as penned by our subject, yet careful research has failed to disclose any ground for its modification. A career marked with so large a measure of success cannot be ascribed to the mere capriciousness of fortune. The favorites of fortune are the brave, the wise, the prompt, the vigilant. His sword flashed too often in the fray; there were too many forced marches, too many desperate charges, too many repulses of the enemy, too much of dogged persistency, to justify disparagement of his military fame by any form of specious reasoning. If he was not a great, he was yet an able, commander.

His sagacity nowhere displayed itself to better effect than in the administration of martial law within his jurisdiction. By wise and vigorous measures he so composed the most turbulent social conditions, that comparative peace and order reigned. If he smote at times with a heavy hand, it was only because milder means were unsuited to the task. General Sanborn always preferred the agencies of peace to those of war; and early following the submission of Lee at Appomattox, he issued his famous General

Orders No. 35, whereby civil law was almost wholly restored in an extensive region, which, for nearly three years, had been subject to martial rule. That the order was both wise and timely, was the unqualified opinion of the governor of that state, expressed in a letter under date of June 1, 1865, in which the writer says :

> **"The Order is most admirably conceived; clearly expressed, and has throughout the right tone; and in it I recognize and gratefully acknowledge the most effective assistance I have yet received toward the reinstatment of order in Missouri. Rest assured that when peace and the arts of industry shall once more have assumed their legitimate sway in the State which you have done so much to save, your name will be cherished with increasing reverence."**

His administration was uniformly characterized by a spirit of justice; and yet it received at times the severest criticism of both friend and foe. "Oftentimes," says the historian of Greene County, "the General was assailed by extreme radical Union men for his protection of the persons and property of rebels from those who wished to 'vex the Midianites,' to spoil them and spare not; and again the Confederate partizans would denounce him for his unrelenting pursuit of bushwhackers, who were rendering so much property insecure and so many lives unsafe. But General Sanborn kept on his course of repressing and repelling the violent of both factions, of protecting the good and punishing the bad, and, with a wise conservatism, so managed affairs that at last all but the most disreputable endorsed him; and, today, he is given great praise by men of all parties and former shades of opinion."

Thus is see (sic) how durably the life of our subject is inter- woven in the history of two great states: Minnesota, the state of his adoption; Missouri, in which he tarried only by the stern decrees of war. And in both he verifies the scripture, "The memory of the just is blessed."

Little remains to be said of his military career. He relinquished his command of Southwestern Missouri, June 7, 1865, and assumed command of the District of the Upper Arkansas, July 12, 1865. He was directed to proceed against various tribes of Indians with a large force of cavalry and infantry. Within a few weeks he had satisfactorily, and without bloodshed, accomplished his mission.

At the conclusion of this service, he was designated and acted as one of a commission, consisting, besides himself, of General Harney, Kit Carson, William Bent, and one of the official staff of the Department of the Interior, to meet in council, October 4, 1865, at the mouth of the Little Arkansas, various Indian tribes. Shortly after this, he was commissioned by the Secretary of the Interior to treat with the Choctaw and other Indian tribes with respect to the liberation of their slaves. This task, although not without its difficulties, was speedily accomplished to the satisfaction of both master and slave.

Thus closed his active services to his Government, save the service to which reference will soon be made. He was brevetted Major General of Volunteers, February 10, 1866, for gallant and meritorious services in the campaign in Missouri against the Confederate Army under General Price; and he was mustered out of military service May 31, 1866.

At the conclusion of his military services, General Sanborn returned to Minnesota with the intention of resuming the practice of his profession and devoting thereto his remaining years. This plan was, however, early interrupted.

His thorough familiarity with the Indian character, and his eminent success in treating with the Indians on the occasions already referred to, led to his appointment in 1867 as a member of a Peace Commission to treat with the Cheyennes, Comanches, and other hostile tribes which had long been the source of trouble to the Government. The personnel of the commission bespeaks the care with which

its members were selected, and the distinguished honor which attaches to an appointment to it. His associates upon the Commission were Generals Sherman, Harney and Terry, and Senator John B. Henderson. The commission prosecuted its labors with great thoroughness, carefully investigating all causes of grievances, and thus acquired such a knowledge of the needs of the tribes as permitted the adoption of a more rational policy of governmental supervision over them. As the result of the intelligent service of the Commission, the Indians were generally pacified and the whites upon the frontiers became comparatively secure.

General Sanborn was engaged more or less with the duties of the Peace Commission for upwards of a year. With what humanitarian views he approached that important task, may be gathered from an address which he delivered in 1869 upon the subject of "Indians and Our Indian Relations." He was unsparing in that address in his characterization of the unwise, illiberal, costly, and destructive policy, which the Government had from the outset evinced toward the inferior race. The keynote of his plea was: "Let them be localized, educated, and Christianized." He may not have been wholly right, but he was unquestionably sincere.

This duty performed, the remaining years of his life were chiefly devoted to professional work. With a view to befriending an old acquaintance, he formed a partnership in 1867 with Charles King, Esq., under the name of Sanborn & King, with offices at Washington, D. C, to which he devoted several months annually and until his retirement from the firm in July, 1878. The business of the Washington firm was extensive and lucrative; and, what was most gratifying to the senior member, it proved of great value to his friend, Mr. King. On January 1, 1871, he became associated with his nephew, the Hon. Walter H. Sanborn, under the firm name of John B. & W. H. Sanborn, to which was added January I, 1882, another nephew, Edward P. Sanborn, Esq. Upon the elevation of the first

named nephew, in 1891 to the office of Circuit Judge, the remaining members continued in professional association under the name of John B. & E. P. Sanborn, until May 15, 1904, when the senior member departed this life.

Upon the retirement of Judge McCreary as Circuit Judge of the Eighth District, many prominent members of the bar, unsolicited by General Sanborn, joined in a strong and earnest recommendation for his appointment to fill the vacancy so caused, thus furnishing an expressive testimonial of the esteem, in which he was held by his professional brethren. The appointment went to the distinguished jurist, Mr. Justice Brewer, in deference in some degree to geographical considerations.

None would approve less than General Sanborn extravagant encomium upon his work as a lawyer. He did not rise to great eminence at the bar. Too many years had been spent upon the New Hampshire farm and devoted to his country's service to afford opportunity for that needful early culture, mental discipline and thorough familiarity with the sages of the law, without which one must be rarely gifted to attain professional greatness. And yet it was his fortune to be professionally identified with several notable causes whose adjudication have become authoritative in the field of jurisprudence. Bearing in mind that his entrance into the legal profession began at an age when many another has already made his mark at the bar, the limited range of his scholastic attainments, the mass of non-professional work in which he was engaged, truth demands that we accord to his work as a lawyer a generous meed of praise. He possessed in a rare degree that excellent quality, too often wanting in the lawyer's intellectual assets, a solid judgment. This bridged him safely over many a dangerous chasm where mere learning might have failed. Experience had taught him the value of a mastery of the facts of his cause, and a perfectly sane mind guided him almost unerringly in the application of legal principles and saved him from that refined reasoning which too commonly misguides the less practical into

unproductive fields. He was a lawyer with whom one could safely counsel in many branches of the law. That sterling manhood which shone through all his acts could not fail to gain for him on all occasions the respect of the bench, bar, and jury; and he was always strong in the confidence of the public. These are qualities which contribute not slightly to success at the bar.

Always a friend to the young, he inclined his ear readily to the younger members of the bar who sought his counsel. To their darkness he furnished light, and to their discouragement he applied the balm of a cheerful word. Ah, what power for good resides in the heart of a noble man! General Sanborn's presence was a benediction.

When the Minnesota Department of the Grand Army of the Republic was formed, General Sanborn became its first commander. He was also a charter member of the Loyal Legion of this state, and was twice elected its commander.

He became a member of the Minnesota Historical Society in 1856, and, except the years in which he was engaged in the military service of his country, he took a deep and active interest in its welfare. He was elected a councilor of this Society in 1875, an office which he continuously occupied until his death. At the death of the late Alexander Ramsey, he was chosen to fill the vacancy so caused in the presidency of the society, a position which he was occupying when he in turn was overtaken by the fell destroyer.

The contributions of General Sanborn to the Loyal Legion and to this Society embrace several original papers of historic interest which are invaluable for the light they shed upon the subjects to which they relate.

He was for many years an active and influential member of the St. Paul Chamber of Commerce, frequent in attendance at its sessions and often participating in the discussion of its questions and measures. He was president of that body

for the years 1881 to 1885. It was during his incumbency of that office that the Chamber of Commerce became deeply interested in the subject of better hotel accommodations for St. Paul. General Sanborn was the moving spirit in arousing public sentiment and enlisting the efforts of men of wealth in furtherance of the enterprise. To no one are the people of this city more deeply indebted than to him for their great hostelry, the Ryan Hotel, which was the direct result of the agitation.

He represented the County of Ramsey in the State Legislature as a member of the House of Representatives in the sessions beginning respectively December 7, 1859, and January 2, 1872; and as State Senator during the Legislatures which assembled respectively on January 8, 1861, January 6, 1891, and January 3, 1893. In the field of legislation, he was always wise, conservative, and assiduous, opposed to extravagant expenditures, and zealous in whatever conduced to the public welfare.

Too often was his door-post marked by the destroying-angel; yet was there apportioned to him a generous measure of domestic happiness. He was married at Newton, N. J., in 1857 to Catharine Hall, who, after three brief years, died in St. Paul, November 16, 1860, and is buried in Oakland cemetery. Two children were born of this marriage. One, a son, died in infancy, while a daughter, Hattie F. Sanborn, lived until 1880.

General Sanborn married Anna Elmer Nixon, on November 27, 1865, and she died in 1878, leaving no children.

April 15, 1880, he married Rachel Rice, daughter of the prominent St. Paul pioneer and Congressman, Hon. Edmund Rice. She, with their four children, Lucy Sargent, John B., Jr., Rachel, and Frederick, who all survive him, have constituted his delightful family. He loved his home, and exemplified the virtues of the true husband and the wise parent. Hospitality presided at his hearth, and the

visitor who crossed his sill, read, Welcome! in his kindly face.

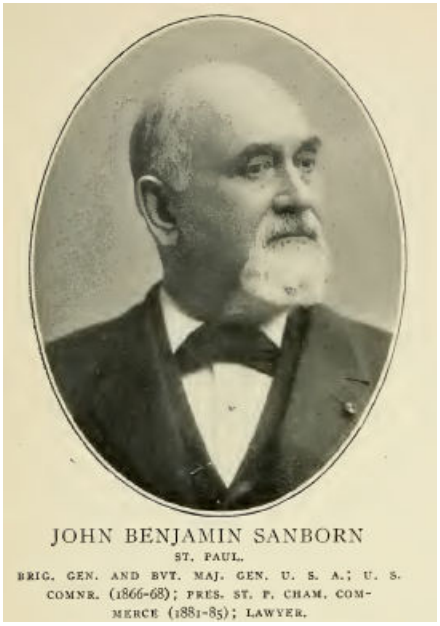
If asked to state the most pronounced characteristic of our subject, the answer would be, great-heartedness. He was charitable by instinct; and his benefactions, though many, were rarely seen or known of men. To any of his companions in arms to whom fortune had been niggardly in material things, he gave freely, and sometimes with greater generosity than was just to himself. He was generous of his time. When many another would have pleaded a pressure of private affairs, he responded promptly, fully, and, not infrequently, with effectiveness. To shirk a duty was foreign to his nature. He never shifted to other shoulders a burden which his own should bear. In his half century of western life he had few idle hours. Every day had its duties and there was no procrastination.

So much health was there in his blood, and so much sunshine in his heart, that his nature never soured under the burden of cares or sorrows or weight of years. Wherever met, whether in the heat of a trial in court, or in the council of this Society which he loved, or in his office, or on the street, or at his home, whatever the employment or occasion, rarely did he withhold a pleasant look and cordial greeting. Yet the clouds of righteous wrath could gather dark and threatening upon his brow and tones of thunder escape his lips. When his command had suffered severely in a fruitless assault against the enemy's fortifications at Vicksburg, an assault which was wholly due to the blunder of another general officer, he displayed splendid rage. If such things were to be tolerated, he would leave the army, he said, if he had to be "shot out of it."

It has been observed by one who knew him well, that he was a natural entertainer. He possessed the rare faculty of adapting himself to the demands of the occasion. Come who would, high or low, wise or simple, one was met who could make any hour interesting. Conversation had made

him ready, and reading had made him full. He had, in his day, enjoyed converse with many distinguished men. He was on familiar terms with many of the noted commanders of the Civil War. His large experience in Washington life brought him in touch with the country's statesmen. He had seen much of courts, judges, and lawyers. He had enjoyed after-dinner chats with Waite, Miller, and Chase. A lively interest in current events, coupled with a fondness for reading and a retentive memory, had stored his mind with a rich fund of valuable information and interesting anecdote. He loved the social hour and made it a joy to those who were wise enough to tap the choicest vintage.

General Sanborn was a public-spirited citizen. His patriotism was a passion. He fought his country's battles because he loved his country. He accepted office at sixty-five as he drew his sword at thirty-five, as a public duty. It was not mere declamation, but the expression of settled conviction, when, in a memorial address in 1885, he exclaimed: "Far distant be the day when the historian of our republic shall be compelled to inscribe on any page those words so frequently found in the histories of declining and failing states, 'Everything became venal.' But let the fires of patriotism burn and glow with flames so pure and bright that all that is sordid and selfish shall be consumed before them and be nowhere found in the republic."


JOHN BENJAMIN SANBORN
ST. PAUL.
BRIG. GEN. AND BVT. MAJ. GEN. U. S. A.; U. S. COMNR. (1866-68); PRES. ST. P. CHAM. COMMERCE (1881-85); LAWYER.

Breathing the same lofty spirit is the fine passage taken from his oration delivered before the Society of the Army of the Tennessee, an address of great strength and beauty: "It is not the man," he says, "who most foments strife,

discord and discontent among the people, or who may delight them, most with strains of eloquence or flashes of intelligence and wit, but he who marks out for them, through the long future, paths of peace and prosperity in which all may walk, and who does most to promote the highest happiness of his fellow country-men, who is the greatest statesman."

Actuated by such sentiments, he did not hesitate to speak strongly against any measure of injustice. He denounced an inflated currency as a prolific source of evil, and he regarded with abhorrence a reckless expenditure of the public revenues. His patriotism displayed itself in his zeal for the welfare of his state and city, as well as of his country. He rejoiced that Minnesota, unlike other states, had not been despoiled of her grant of lands made by Congress for educational purposes; and he looked with disfavor upon the tendency to multiply offices, an evil all too prominent in recent years. He had given far too much thought to social problems not to understand that business prosperity and excessive taxation are incompatible conditions. That inflexible integrity which ruled his purposes left no room for doubt that a public office is a public trust.

He was brave in death. When the hour for his departure had arrived, it found him strong in the Christian faith, and he faced the Hereafter with serenity,

> **"Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch**
> **About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."**

Naught would we detract from the honors due to New Hampshire, whose rugged hills were pressed by the childhood feet of Webster and Chase, Dix and Chandler, Cass and Greeley, whose scholars have enriched thought, and whose patriots have strengthened the pillars of the Republic; yet fitting is it that, rather than the New England state which boasts his birth, her fair young sister, Minnesota, which developed his strength, should treasure

in her soil the ashes of the citizen whose deeds are among the jewels that adorn her brow. □

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Credits

Portraits have been added by the MLHP.

The etching on page 7 is from a chapter by Hiram F. Stevens on "The Bench and Bar of St. Paul" in General Christopher Columbus Andrews's *History of St. Paul, Minn.*, published in 1890.

The photograph of General Sanborn on page 11 was taken on January 1, 1860, and is from the Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society.

The photographs of Greenleaf Clark on page 2, Henry Childs on page 8 and General Sanborn on page 28 are from *Men of Minnesota* (1902).

This Memorial was published first in Volume 10, Part 2, *Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society*, pages 831-856 (1905).

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