

BIOGRAPHICAL RECORD

OF THE

OFFICERS AND GRADUATES

OF THE

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute,

1824-1886.

EDITED BY

HENRY B. NASON,

SECRETARY OF THE ASSOCIATION OF GRADUATES, 1872-1886.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

BENJAMIN H. HALL.

TROY, N. Y.:

WILLIAM H. YOUNG.

1887.

PRESIDENTS.

THE REV. SAMUEL BLATCHFORD, D. D., the first president of the Institute, was born in Devonshire County, England, in 1767. He was educated for the ministry at the Dissenting College of Theology, at Homerton, near London; married in 1788; ordained in 1789 pastor over the Presbyterian Church in Kingston, Devonshire. In 1791 he became pastor of the church at Topoham, near Exeter, in Devonshire, where he remained until in answer to a call from the church at Redford, Westchester County, N. Y., he, in 1795, came to America. For eleven years he lived at Redford and at Bridgeport, Conn., and in 1804 he was called to take charge of the church at Lansingburgh and Waterford. Here an acquaintance with the Hon. Stephen Van Rensselaer grew into a friendship, and he was named in 1824, by the founder, as one of the trustees and first president of the Institute. This position he held for four years. He died at Lansingburgh on the 27th of March, 1828. He was the father of Dr. Thomas W. Blatchford, of Troy; of Richard M. Blatchford, of New York, and the grandfather of the Hon. Samuel Blatchford, U. S. District Judge for the Southern District of New York.

THE REV. JOHN CHESTER, D. D., second president of the Institute, was for twelve years pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in the city of Albany, from 1815 to 1828. He was born at Weathersfield, Conn., in August, 1785—the son of Col. John Chester, of the Revolutionary Army. He entered Yale College in 1801 and graduated in 1804. He pursued his theological studies under the direction of Dr. Joseph Lyman, of Hatfield, Mass., and was licensed to preach by the Hartford Association College in 1807, at the age of 22. His first efforts to publish the gospel were made in Marblehead, Mass. He also preached a short time in Springfield, Mass., and also in Middletown, Conn., and then removed to this State and was stationed at Cooperstown, and from 1810 to 1815 was pastor at Hudson, from which latter place he was called to Albany, where his relations

with Mr. Van Rensselaer, the Founder, was such as led to his appointment and acceptance of the office of President on the 25th of June, 1828, which office he held, in the declining state of his health, for the period of only about six months. In 1821 he was honored with the degree of Doctor of Divinity by the corporation of Union College. He died at Philadelphia on the 12th day of January, 1829. He was an eminent divine of that day, of great learning and eloquence, and having the respect and love not only of the people of Albany but of all the Church. An eloquent scholar himself, and deeply convinced of the connection and dependence between science and religion, he was devoted to the cause of education. He married, in Philadelphia, the daughter of Robert Ralston. He was the associate and friend of Chancellor James Kent, and succeeded him as the president of the Albany Female Academy, of which he was one of the founders. He was also a patron and trustee of the Albany Academy. Dr. Nott preached his funeral sermon. He left a family. One of his daughters married J. L. Van Schoonhoven, Esq., of Troy.

ELIPHALET NOTT, D. D., LL. D., the third president of the Institute, and at the same time President of Union College, Schenectady, N. Y., was born in Ashford, Windham County, Conn., June 25th, 1773, and died in Schenectady, January 29th, 1866. He was to a great extent self-educated, having never received a college training. He studied divinity in his native county, and at the age of twenty-one was sent out as a domestic missionary to the central part of the state of New York, at that early day offering a wide field for evangelical effort. On passing through the old settlement of Cherry Valley, he was requested to take charge of the Presbyterian Church at that place, which call he accepted, and, in addition to his pastoral duties, he also became a teacher in the Academy. Two or three years later he was called to the Presbyterian Church at Albany, where he at once took a prominent position as a preacher, and was listened to by large congregations. Among his successful pulpit efforts while at Albany, was a sermon on the death of Alexander Hamilton. In 1804, he was chosen President of Union College, Schenectady, which place he continued to fill for sixty-two years, until his death, being the oldest head of any literary institution in the