

JUDGE GEORGE GREENE.

BY B. L. WICK.

At the Founders Day gathering at Coe College on December 3, 1914, considerable new material came to light concerning the life and services of George Greene, one of the founders of that institution.

George Greene was a pioneer along many lines in the development of the State. He was born at Staffordshire, England, April 15, 1817, and was the eldest of three sons, George, William and Joseph, all of whom settled, lived and died in Cedar Rapids.

Robert Greene, the father, emigrated with his wife and family to America in 1820, locating in Buffalo, New York, where he became a contractor and engaged in building the locks on the Erie Canal. He died in 1831, and George Greene, then barely fifteen years of age, became the sole support of the family. About 1836 he went to England for a time, but soon made his way back to America. He obtained some schooling in Buffalo and attended Aurora Seminary, French Institute at Geneva and Caryville Academy. As clerk and assistant he entered the office of George Baker, a well-known lawyer. He soon went to live with a Dr. Chapin, and for a time was imbued with the idea of becoming a doctor. He did study medicine for awhile but later gave it up and began the study of law, aiming to settle down at Buffalo in the practice of law.

On May 30, 1838, he married Harriet Merritt of Buffalo. She was the daughter of a physician of that city and a sister of Colonel Merritt who later figured as a newspaper man and a politician in Iowa. Shortly after his marriage he migrated to Davenport, Iowa, where he intended to locate. There he met David D. Owen, son of Robert Owen, who was at that time making a geological survey of the new Territory for the government. He joined Mr. Owen in this work which lasted six months and gave him an opportunity to become acquainted not only with a new country but with most of the settlers. He be-

came a friend of Dr. Owen who no doubt helped the young man in many ways.

From Davenport Mr. Greene removed to Linn county, locating at a little trading village known as Ivanhoe, on the Cedar river near where Mt. Vernon is now situated. It was at that time supposed to be the future metropolis of that section of the country, but is now known only by name. Here he brought his young wife and established the first store in Linn county. He also taught school during the winter. The county seat being located at Marion, some distance from Ivanhoe, in the spring of 1840 he removed to that place and began the practice of law which he continued for five years. He had scarcely been in the county a year before he was elected as a representative to the Territorial legislature where he served two sessions.

Before leaving New York Mr. Greene had been appointed by Governor Seward as lieutenant in one of the New York regiments raised to put down the so-called Patriots' Rebellion. After removing to Iowa he was appointed a lieutenant colonel by Governor Chambers. However, he never became imbued with the military spirit and never entered active military service.

In 1842 he was sent as a special delegate to Washington to secure the location of the land office at Marion. In this he was successful.

Perceiving the advantage of a water power to operate grist and saw mills, during the summer of 1841, with N. B. Brown and others, he purchased the water power on the Cedar river, locating the town site first called Rapids City and later Cedar Rapids.

Being of a restless disposition, and finding little if any law practice in this new portion of the Territory, he removed in the spring of 1845 to Dubuque, seeking a more extensive field. He associated with J. J. Dyer, afterwards judge of the United States district court. In connection with the legal business, which was not over-lucrative even at Dubuque, he became the editor of the *Miners' Express*, one of the first newspapers of the Territory, and edited it for three years. His talents and

legal knowledge soon became recognized, and in October, 1847, he was appointed judge of the supreme court of the new State, on the resignation of Judge Thomas S. Wilson. In December, 1848, he was elected justice by the general assembly, and served out his entire term of six years. It was during this period of his life that he edited the Iowa Reports known as Greene's Reports, consisting of four volumes. The opinions in these reports all bear evidence of his marked ability.

In April, 1850, his wife died and in 1851 he removed with his two children to Cedar Rapids. From that time until his death except for a short stay in Chicago where he was a member of the law firm of Greene and Bently, he was a resident of the county which he assisted in many ways to develop. In January, 1855, he married Frances R. Graves, daughter of Calvin Graves of Cooperstown, New York.

Judge Greene, with John Weare, started the first bank in Cedar Rapids, known as Greene & Weare. Branches of this bank were established at Des Moines, Council Bluffs, Omaha, Fort Dodge, Sioux City and other centers of population. The panic of 1857 wiped out most of them and the firm dissolved, the partners liquidating.

Judge Greene later became interested in railroad building. He was one of the organizers and directors of the Chicago, Iowa & Nebraska railroad, which was completed to Cedar Rapids in the summer of 1859. In this connection he was associated with John I. Blair. He was also engaged in building a short line of railroad sixty miles long, known as the McGregor Western, now a part of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul railway. He was likewise connected with the building of the Rockford, Rock Island & St. Louis railway along the eastern bank of the Mississippi river, and with building the St. Louis, Hannibal & Keokuk and the Memphis, Kansas & Colorado and the Muscatine Western railways. While assisting with others in building the above-named railways, he was really one of the main promoters of what was known as the Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Minnesota railroad, a system which, with its branches, made Cedar Rapids a city of considerable commercial importance. At the time, these railroad

enterprises from a financial standpoint, were a failure, but Judge Greene did not give up, and after many disasters in railway building, succeeded in putting the last-named road on its feet, so that it became one of the best paying properties in the State.

Railway building was not Judge Greene's only interest. He was largely responsible for the purchase of a river steamer called "Cedar Rapids" which ran between Cedar Rapids and St. Louis just before the advent of the railroad. This steamer met with an accident and the owners lost heavily. This was the first and last steamboat venture on the Cedar river. He was also interested in one of the first stores opened in Cedar Rapids, as well as in the first newspaper, called the *Progressive Era*, edited by Dan Finch. He was the first president of the Republican Printing Company, a corporation still in existence. He early saw the need of a public water supply for the use of the fast-growing city, and organized the Cedar Rapids Water Company, which has lately been taken over by the city. He built the first street car line and erected the first opera house. Many of these enterprises did not pay, but Judge Greene early saw that these things were essential to the growth of a city.

His broad mind also comprehended the need of other than the material things of life. He was one of the organizers of the Episcopal church, of St. Luke's Hospital and of Coe College, and helped in many of the city's charitable organizations.

Judge Greene passed away June 23, 1880, in the sixty-fourth year of his age. He had twelve children, seven of whom survived him. His widow passed away December 13, 1911, in the eighty-first year of her age.

The industry and perseverance of Judge Greene entitled him to a high place in the history of the State. His acquaintance over the country was extended and he associated with men of wealth and induced them to invest their money in Iowa. He was a sound lawyer, a logical judge and a far-sighted financier. His influence in every way was elevating and his contribution to the history of the development of the State in the early days cannot be too highly commended.

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