

James Church Alvord prepared for college at Phillips Academy, and graduated at Dartmouth in 1827. He studied law with the late Chief Justice Daniel Wells at Greenfield, Mass., and at the law school, at New Haven, Conn., and Cambridge, Mass. He was admitted to the bar in 1829, and in 1833, on the death of Prof. Ashman, of the Cambridge Law School, Prof. Greenleaf, who had been appointed to succeed him, not being able to take the place for several months, Mr. Alvord, then twenty-five years of age, was appointed to fill the position during the interval.

He was elected representative in the Mass. Legislature for Greenfield in 1836; also to the state senate in 1837, and to Congress in 1838. He was the first man ever elected to Congress on a distinctly anti-slavery platform, but death came before he took his seat.

Extracts from an obituary notice by Hon. Benj. R. Curtis, U. S. Supreme Court judge:

"The numerous and great obstacles which beset the path of a young lawyer everywhere, and especially at the crowded bar of our Commonwealth, he cleared at a bound, and almost at once stood in the front rank of the distinguished lawyers whom the valley of the Conn. River for several generations has continued to produce.

"His was a truly remarkable mind. With a quickness of intellect which travelled to conclusions with the rapidity of light, he united habits of the most patient investigation, searching always for a principle, yet he had as much deference for authority as a vigorous mind can feel. Though capable of long continued labor, his power of concentration was such as almost to dispense with it. Though exceedingly zealous in action and of ardent temperament, his opinions on the most exciting subject of the day were uniformly the result of a nicely balanced judgment.

"United with these intellectual qualities was a character from which they borrowed new vigor. Courage always rose with the occasion until it became indomitable; firmness of purpose which no opposition could shake; a generous self devotion, easily excited; an entire frankness and openness, which sometimes would have seemed almost child-like, if it had not been united with a keen insight into the character of others—all these qualities combined gave him a control over men such as few can acquire.

"The writer of this imperfect sketch has known him in the halls of legislation, at the bar, in professional studies, in the offices of friendship, and though he was ambitious, he was never seen in the least to attempt to advance himself, professionally or politically, by the smallest deviation from principle.

"From year to year the writer has found his convictions strengthened that if the ordinary length of years should be granted to Mr. Alvord, the country would owe him at his death a debt of gratitude such as is rarely due."

Wendell Phillips, hearing of the death of Mr. Alvord, sent this tribute from London, Eng.:

"His services in the cause of Anti-slavery in the Mass. Legislature cannot