

WILLIAM W. UPTON

William W. Upton was born at Victor, Ontario County, New York, July 11, 1817. His father, James Upton, a substantial farmer and a man of considerable prominence in the county, was fifth in descent from one John Upton, a cadet of a gentle English family, who settled in Mass. in 1637. Judge Upton's mother, Olive Broughton, was of Connecticut descent.

The son received the scanty educational advantages which Western New York then afforded, including a course at Lima Academy; but these were but the beginnings of a course of study that was lifelong. He acquired a knowledge of Latin and mathematics rare even among specialists, became a good French scholar and possessed a familiarity with English literature rarely excelled. Indeed, his life was essentially that of a student, and his temperament that of a scholar.

After a preliminary settlement in Michigan in 1838 he taught school, worked as a surveyor, studied law in his native state and was admitted to the bar. In 1840 he married, and began the practice of his profession at Victor, Michigan. He was admitted to the bar in 1840. He was supervisor of Victor during 1840-45, surveyor of Clinton County during 1841-45, county treasurer during 1845-47 and a member of the legislature which made Lansing the capitol. He was appointed district attorney for Ingham County in 1848 and was elected to the same office in 1849 and 1851. He had removed to DeWitt in 1845 and later to Lansing, in which city he built the first house that was not of logs in 1847. In March 1852, he resigned his office, and with his wife and three children crossed the plains to California. There he practiced his profession, at first at Weaverville, and from 1855 at Sacramento. He was a member of the legislature in 1856 and prosecuting attorney of Sacramento County during 1861-64. That climate having proved fatal to his wife and several of his children, he married Marietta Bryan in 1860. He removed to Portland, Oregon, in the spring of 1865 and at once took a place in the front rank of the Oregon bar. He was elected to the legislature in 1866, and was appointed a justice of the Supreme Court for the fourth circuit in 1867 and was elected to the same position for a term of six years in 1868, becoming Chief Justice in 1872. He returned to the practice of law in 1874, but in 1877 was appointed second comptroller of the treasury of the United States, by President Hayes, and removed with his family to Washington City. He filled that position through three administrations. He resigned this office June 1, 1885, and continued the practice of law in the latter city until his death, which occurred January 23, 1896. His "Digest of Decisions of the Second Comptroller, 1869-84," was published by the government in 1885.

Judge Upton was originally a democrat, voting for Douglas in 1860; but from the latter date was a republican. He was a Freemason having been initiated in Michigan in 1849; received all the degrees of the so-called York and Scottish Rites and succeeded General Albert Pike as president of the Masonic Veteran Association of the District of Columbia.

Tenth Chief Justice of the Supreme Court for Oregon -- 1872 to 1874; Associate Justice from 1868 to 1872.