

Address of Hon. Charles S. Hamlin,  
April 17, 1917,  
before the Roxbury Historical Society.

Mr. President and Mr. Toastmaster, Fellow Citizens:

I want to thank you for the honor you have conferred upon me in inviting me to come home and address the Roxbury Historical Society but at the same time I must confess that when I received your invitation I was somewhat embarrassed. You can well understand that at first it seemed almost impossible for me to leave my post of duty in Washington, but I thought the matter over and I finally told my associates that your invitation was a command, which must be obeyed.

Times such as the present call for oratory of the highest standard, but, my friends, I am not going to attempt much tonight other than to have a heart-to-heart talk with you and tell you something of my recollections of Roxbury, going back many years before this Society was organized.

I want to say in the first place that to me every foot of ground in Roxbury is sacred territory. In those beautiful words of Shakespeare:

“ It is my own and I as rich in having such a jewel  
As twenty seas if all their sands were pearl,  
Their waters nectar and their rocks pure gold.”

Such is the feeling that I have for this ancient town. I spent all my boyhood here, my early training was given here by my father and mother. They are sleeping today in Forest Hills and when my life is over I look to taking my long slumber in this historic town.

As I remember Roxbury — and I can go back to the period before the town was annexed to Boston — it was a fine example of the typical New England town, filled with men of sterling character, men of rugged independence, the very best type of the citizenship of America; and that type, I am glad to say, has been perpetuated down to the present time.

I can remember Roxbury as little more than a very small city, perhaps you might say a large New England town. I can remember well its woods and fields. No forest in Africa was deeper, to my mind, than were French's woods. I can remember so well the Bussey woods, near the old chemical chimney. There was a gruesome tale that one of the maids in our house used to tell me of the babes that died in those woods, and I don't think it added to the speed with which I went to sleep. Even now, as I go by those woods, I have a creepy feeling.

As a boy, I used to go out to the old Brook Farm — certainly one of your historical monuments — although perhaps a little over the Roxbury line, I think it was in old Roxbury. It

did not need the "Blithedale Romance" to make it famous.

As I remember Roxbury it was a decidedly mountainous region and if any one doubts that today I will take him to the cliff on Regent Street, just under my old house on St. James Street. I think the proudest moment of my life was when I succeeded in descending that cliff from my house — the latter part of it was a somewhat sudden descent, not very pleasant to me; but I felt I had achieved a great feat.

We all remember the rugged cliff on Shawmut Avenue. Now it is called Washington Street, although why they took away the old name I don't know. My friend, Arthur Winslow, lived at its base and we used often to roast potatoes on the rocks, but I want to say truthfully I never tried to ascend or descend that cliff. It was a somewhat difficult proposition. In those days we often went skating on Harris Pond, and there wasn't a boy in Roxbury that didn't feel grateful to Mr. Harris for what he did for us, and there isn't a Roxbury boy today in whose memory his name is not green.

There was also the pond in French's woods. I think we used to catch hornpout there. We used to go there, I remember, for our picnics, and play Indians; and really, as I have said, it was to our minds, almost a primeval forest. We used to coast on Nawn's Hill and Honeysuckle Hill, and many a day I have spent in that delightful pastime. Then we used to walk over to Savin Hill where we had our bathing and our boating. To me all those places are so filled with interest that every few years I make a practice of going to them and seeing them again. Many of the old land marks are lost, but those still remaining call back to my mind delightful recollections.

I remember so well the old churches. There was the Catholic Church on Tommy's Rock. I don't know whether that name still survives. I remember so well Reverend Father O'Bierne, whose very face was a benediction. There wasn't a young fellow among us who didn't revere and respect that man; and I can say as I become older the more am I impressed with the certainty with which young men can gauge the character of older men. The men we thought in those days were good men I tell you were good men. No boy can ever be deceived.

There was the Baptist Church on Dudley Street, and I cannot tell you what a pleasure it is to me to find my old friend Dr. King here with us in these festivities this evening. I wouldn't dare to say that he and I were intimate friends, for I was a very young boy. I pictured him then as a very mature gentleman. I find now that he is certainly years younger than I then pictured him and that was a good many years ago. His daughter Susie was my sister's dearest friend. His daughter Lida I have not seen for a great many years, but she is now one of the eminent educators of this country.

Then there was Dr. Plumb of the church on Walnut Avenue; there was dear old Dr. Putnam — and what Roxbury man can ever forget the powerful influence for good that he wielded? There was also St. James, where I went to church, under the rector, the Reverend Percy Browne, now, alas, gathered to his Fathers. I remember so well the old church with its box pews, and I was so indignant when they took out the box pews, for purely personal reasons — they were so much more comfortable

to rest in, and in a tiresome sermon there was ready relief! I remember once we had an organist, Samuel Studley. I think he is gathered to his Fathers, too. He was later a well-known opera director. I remember once when the collection was being taken up he improvised on the organ and I can never forget how pleased the congregation was. He was playing "I am called little Buttercup" from Pinafore! Fortunately the rector did not recognize the air. I think I was the only one who did, but I believe later Mr. Studley went a little further and some of the committee at last recognized some of his improvisations and there was an immediate change in the character of the music.

Roxbury, as I have said, was in those days an independent community. Boston was a long distance away. I can remember when the cars from Boston came out only to Boston neck and then one had to get into an old omnibus, and in the winter it had runners on it, and I can never forget how cold it was! We then had only the old Metropolitan Line of horse cars and from the memory I have of them and the looks of them they must have been built long before the battle of Lexington. Finally the people rose in their wrath and a most progressive, aristocratic company was formed — the Highland Horse Car Company. The plaid tickets even were works of art, and each car had two conductors. The conductors of the Metropolitan Line were not very courteous, they did not encourage, they rather discouraged, people going out to Roxbury, but the twin conductors of the Highland Line would smilingly beckon to you on the street and almost insist on your getting into the cars.

I also had the pleasure of going to the public schools and those public schools are the very foundation of the greatness of the United States. I went four years to the Winthrop Street Primary School. I shall never forget the kindness I experienced and the moulding of my character at the hands of Miss Brooks, the principal. I honor her and I wish it were my privilege to take her by the hand and tell her what I owe her.

I went for some years to the Lewis Grammar School. I never shall forget the good it did me. There my face was washed about twice a day for every winter month when there was available snow. We were a democratic community and every man had to fight but I soon found I could succeed perhaps in washing the other fellow's face once or twice every three or four times and on the whole I managed to hold my own.

I remember so well Mr. Boardman, the principal, and also Mr. Charles King. I received — what shall I say — many marks of not exactly affection at his hands, but I think they were all well deserved and he helped mould my character, although at times it was a somewhat difficult job. Nor can I ever forget my teacher, Miss Seaverns, who is living today.

Then I went to the Roxbury Latin School which was founded by John Eliot twenty-five years after the landing of the Pilgrims. It is a great school, one of the great educational monuments of the United States. It is my earnest hope that that school will never leave Roxbury, that it will stand as a monument in the future as it has stood in the past. I never shall forget that great teacher, William C. Collar, and the splendid training we received at his hands. There was also Moses Grant Daniel, another most successful teacher, there was Mr. Forbes, there was my friend Dr. Withington, whom I troubled much as a boy, but I can see now, that what he used to do for me was for my good. I remember so well dear old Julius Eichberg, the music teacher, and although he gave me a valuable musical training I am afraid I have given him many discordant moments. I was in that school seven years. We were instructed so well I really at one time could speak moderately well the Latin language. I don't know whether that is considered now to the advantage of a man or to his disadvantage. In those days we thought a classical education was a *sine qua non*. Since then I have read magazine articles against it, but I am an old fogey; I was brought up in it; I believe it is the foundation of culture.

I remember so well the old graveyard adjoining the Latin School. We boys used to go and peep into the tombs — but never after dark. When we were very hard up for money we used also to dig dandelions in the graveyard and sell them for a substantial sum to the butchers in the neighborhood. I remember very well the Rugby game of football — up to that time we used to play the old game where you kicked the ball and could not run with it. I played baseball and football, and I played about everything except perhaps attention to my studies during the seven years I was in that school. We played baseball on Miller's field. I remember the games we used to play with the Roxbury High School. How we hated those boys, probably because they generally beat us. I remember once a terrific stroke made by Charlie Pierce. I think he struck a ball away out into Blue Hill Avenue. I don't know where he is today, but I respect him, for I remember he made a home run. I know it defeated the Roxbury Latin School and we consequently weren't so pleased with it.

I remember so well the military drill — I had six years of it — and looking back on that I want to say that I believe it was the best experience I ever went through, this six years' drilling in

Bacon's Hall. I am glad to see my old friend, Mr. Bacon, here tonight. I never shall forget how, twice a week, we used to go down to Bacon's Hall where we were trained by Brigadier-General Hobart Moore. I rose to the elevated rank of adjutant of the battalion. I believe if I could find an old copy of Upton's Tactics I could quickly pass an examination for a colonel's commission. It gave me a new idea of discipline and it taught me that an order had to be obeyed and when I gave an order in my turn that order had to be obeyed.

I remember another thing that wasn't perhaps quite as pleasant in after days. Whenever we went down to drill we stopped at the bakery on Regent Street where I bought an enormous segment of Washington pie. It was delicious, but it laid the foundation for an immutable, eternal dyspepsia. However, the military drill was a great advantage to me. It was only the Washington pie I had cause to regret.

I remember so well the Centennial Day in 1876. It was a great day for Roxbury. We had a great public parade, the school regiment paraded. We went up to Dr. Putnam's church and General Horace Binney Sargent delivered an oration. That seems to me as but yesterday.

Then we had many social diversions. I remember old Kennedy Hall. I suppose that is no longer standing as Kennedy Hall. I used to receive instruction in dancing in Kennedy Hall, much to my disgust, for I preferred football and baseball, but it was deemed best as part of my education that I should dance, but I must say I have long since forgotten how.

We also had the Lyceum course of lectures. I remember John B. Gough, the famous temperance lecturer. I remember the silver-tongued Wendell Phillips. I heard him give a lecture on the lost arts and on the Indian wars. Then at the end of the series we always had the Royal Grand Maritana Opera Company led by McDonald and Barnaby. He used to sing the "Old Cork Leg," as well as operatic roles.

Then there was Institute Hall. It is now the Dudley Street Opera House, but in those days it was Institute Hall. There we used to have spelling bees. The Roxbury Latin School often spelled with the Roxbury High school. I always entered the spelling bee, but I always fell out with remarkable agility. I was a fairly good speller in those days but have been deteriorating ever since and now I am absolutely hopeless.

On the Fourth of July we used to have entertainments in Institute Hall. I remember so well Peter McCann, the comic artist. How we applauded him! I suppose the poor man is gathered to his Fathers, but I think I would embrace Peter McCann if I saw him today.

Every year we had a grand military drama called "The Union Spy, or The Battle of Malvern Hill." The Roxbury City Guard with their blue uniforms took the part of the Union troops and the Norfolk Guards with their gray uniforms took the part of the Confederate troops. I shall never forget how I was thrilled. I think I could have taken any of the parts, I knew them so well, and Peter McCann was one of the heroes of the play.

There were so many other people in Roxbury whom I remember. I have spoken of the guest of the evening, Dr. King. I have said a word about dear old Dr. Putnam and Percy Browne at St. James. You remember, or many of you remember, that splendid man, Charles K. Dillaway, and what he did for public education in Roxbury. We never can forget the memory of Edward Everett Hale, or William Lloyd Garrison, Mayor Lewis, Mayor Curtis, Mayor Gaston — all Roxbury boys. I remember so well the beautiful house of Nathaniel J. Bradlee, the architect, one of the memorable houses of Roxbury. I remember L. Foster Morse, Mr. Shuman, still with us, and Mayor O'Brien, who served many years ago, but we all remember him and respect him as one of the best mayors Boston ever had.

In those days, while very young, I was dragged into politics. Living in Ward 21 (now Ward 16), where there were, to my youthful recollections, about five thousand Republicans and about fifteen or twenty Democrats, I was always charged, as a Democrat, with the duty of running for office. I remember I ran for the Massachusetts Senate almost before I took off short trousers. I ran against Halsey J. Boardman. I think if I had been counting ever since I could not have counted the majority of Mr. Boardman.

Many of my old friends are here tonight, among others, Jack Kelley, and Honorable Richard Sullivan, and Mr. Byrne. I miss the familiar figure, long since dead, of my old friend, Patrick Maguire, one of the bosses, as he was called, of the Democratic party. I shall never forget my first interview with him. I induced some one to give me a letter to him and I said, "Mr. Maguire, I am very much interested in the cause of education and I want to know if you will nominate me for the School Committee of Boston." For a long time he never said a word. He tipped his chair back. He finally said, "Young man, you are bound to succeed in this world. I never heard such a cheeky, impudent proposition in my life. A man of such cheek and such impudence—there is something for you in the future. I am going to keep my eye on you." I learned to respect and admire Mr. Maguire and we worked for many years together.

You all remember Mr. James Forsyth, who, with his family, donated the Forsyth Dental Infirmary. You all remember Judge Bolster. We are glad to see here tonight our distinguished mayor, Mayor Curley. He is a Roxbury boy.

I remember so well Colonel Olin who lived next to me on St. James Street. I loved him as a young boy. He was at

that time, I think, the baseball reporter of the Boston Daily Advertiser, and every day if I happened to be in front of his house he would say, "Come along with me, Charlie," and he would take me into the field. You may be very sure I always happened to be in front of his house when he started. A little later I ran for the office of Secretary of State, when Governor Russell was elected and I — was not elected. Mr. Olin was my competitor. I remember at a rally — it was very frosty — you couldn't get up any enthusiasm — I spoke of my competitor, Mr. Olin, and I said, "My fellow citizens, candor compels me to say he is a better man than I to be Secretary of State." I never received so much applause in my life. Every man in the audience agreed with me. I received their applause, but Colonel Olin received their votes.

I remember so well a dear friend of mine, Sheriff Bayley. I am very sure his daughter, the young lady who is trying to take down my random remarks, won't feel offended when I say he was a very dear friend of mine and of my sisters. Then there was Mrs. Thomas Barry, the famous actress, there was C. Leslie Allen and his daughter, Viola Allen. We used to go to Sunday School together. I think she is still — if I remember rightly — on the stage. I remember also Mr. McGettrick, the famous walker, a Roxbury boy. I spent many hours watching him walk. He was a great hero in my memory.

I have just time to speak of another man whom I loved, Colonel Almon D. Hodges of Roxbury. I never shall forget his kindness to all men and especially to my family when we lived next to him. I shall never forget the first day we came there and his sending his man Patrick in with a great pail of milk. I loved him as my own father. He was one of the prominent men of Roxbury in those days. He was president of the National Bank, as I remember; he was the first Colonel of the Roxbury Horse Guards. There is one story in my memory which his son, a very dear friend of mine, who is here tonight, may remember. The story was told me as a child that at one distinguished parade of the Roxbury Horse Guards a great gust of wind came up and not only blew the Colonel's hat off, but also blew his wig off! I hope that is a myth, but I shall always live and die in the belief that it was not a myth but was true.

You will remember General Nelson A. Miles, we can never forget him, and Colonel William Raymond Lee, and Captain John L. Swift. Captain Swift and I used to go to Plymouth the night before elections. When we reached the station he went to the Republican rally and I went to the Democratic rally. I used to repeat his stories. I hope he used to repeat mine.

And last, but not least, we all remember Admiral Winslow. The old Admiral was a gruff sea-dog. We young fellows were in mortal terror of him. His temper was of the irascible kind. Occasionally in playing football we would kick the ball into his yard and the unfortunate kicker used to have to go and apologize. I used to go there about once a week. But finally, after somewhat gruff remonstrance, he would pat you on the shoulder and you would realize that under that gruff exterior he had a kind heart.

I remember Joel Seaverns, the son of Dr. Seaverns. He went to England and later became a banker and Member of Parliament. I think he is still living. I remember also my friend Harry Nawn. I don't see him here tonight, but he occupied a very important part in my life thirty or forty, or I might almost say fifty years ago.

I had many classmates at the Roxbury Latin School. I had the Reverend Mr. Rousmaniere, the Dean of St. Paul's. The Reverend Percy Grant, an eminent clergyman in New York. Reverend Walter Smith, the Reverend Wilfred Robbins, the Reverend Augustus Lord and many others. I remember one year I went to Albany to the Cathedral and Dean Robbins was the Dean. I was asked what I thought of the sermon. I said, "I have known him all my life." He was a typical "good boy," and I remember, so many times I would place a tack in his seat and as he gently sat down only quickly to rise, I remember the beautiful Christian smile that came over his face. I could have told it was Wilfred Robbins if I had only seen that smile. There was Professor Kittredge, and Judge McLaughlin, who lived near me in St. James Street. He is an ornament to the bench of Massachusetts, and his appointment was an honor well deserved and a tribute to the very best citizenship of the old Bay State. Then we had Ned Curtis, later the mayor. He was an old Roxbury boy. He used to go to a private school on St. James Street, Miss Weston's School. The greatest joy of the Roxbury Latin School boys was to try to waylay Miss Weston's boys and wash their faces with snow. Whenever I met Ned Curtis, however, the joy was generally on his side. Then there was Curtis Guild, late Governor of the Commonwealth, who lived on St. James Street and was one of my dearest friends.

There were also, and still are — I must hurry along — many historical landmarks; there is the old Eustis Street burying ground where are the tombs of the Governors Dudley. My wife is a lineal descendant of Governor Dudley. Many a time she has gone to look at those old tombs. There is the house, as you know, of Gilbert Stuart, there is the old Roxbury fort, there is the old Warren homestead and the Shirley-Eustis house; and I want to tell the people of this Society what a prize the people of Roxbury have in the Shirley-Eustis house. I want the people of the Roxbury Historical Society to take an interest in the house. Governor Shirley was Governor of Massachusetts from 1741 to 1756. He built this house in 1750. It was known as the Shirley palace. Washington came here and was a guest at the Shirley house. He came to tell the Governor of the death of his son, under Braddock, at the battle of Monongahela. Governor Shirley was not very popular with our people; we disagreed with his ideas and he finally was made Governor of the Bahama Islands. He later returned to Roxbury, however, and died in 1771 and was buried in King's Chapel burying ground.



Then Governor Eustis bought the place. He was one of the eminent men of the United States. He was Secretary of War for three years, Minister to Holland for three years; he was Governor of Massachusetts from 1823 to 1825, and he died while he was Governor. In 1824 there was a great historic event in Roxbury. Lafayette, the French patriot, came to this country as the guest of the United States, and he came to Roxbury to call on Governor Eustis and to pay an official visit to the Shirley mansion. It was a great day for Roxbury. He, was escorted by the Norfolk Guards and the Dorchester Rifles on the way to Boston. The Roxbury fort saluted him. There was a triumphal arch on Washington Street near the old fortifications, and the next day he returned to the Shirley-Eustis house and was given a dinner, at which all the celebrities of the time were present. It is said that Lafayette, when he looked at the magnificent staircase, said that he could drive a coach and four up it.

For many years Madame Eustis kept the house exactly as it was when Governor Eustis died. A number of years ago the city said it was not safe and must be destroyed, and a number of people, many being descendants of Governor Eustis, got together and raised some money to perpetuate it. Prominent among these was Woodbury Langdon of Portsmouth, N. H., who gave us a liberal donation, and arranged with a bank in Portsmouth to place a mortgage on the house.

Mrs. Hamlin is the possessor of many interesting pieces of furniture belonging to Governor Eustis. She has also his gold watch. She has his order of the Cincinnati, signed by General Washington; and it will be her pleasure to give these over when the perpetuity of the house is assured. The house is practically in the condition it was in 1750. Our hope is that the patriotic societies will take individual rooms in that house and restore them. The expense will be slight. I want the Roxbury Historical Society to take a room there.

Now, my friends, I have only a few words more. We see our country at the height of its marvelous development. We know in colonial times we had thirteen independent colonies; then they were almost united as a protection against the Indians. Then came the Committees of Correspondence, and the battles of Lexington and Concord; then the Continental Congress, followed by the Articles of Confederation and finally by the Constitution of the United States.

The original conception of the Constitution was a union of States. The people of this country were jealous of a new national government, and it was only under the inspiration of Daniel Webster and John Marshall that the people recognized that we had welded together a great nation, "one nation, indivisible."

One illustration of the changing conception of our idea of government can be seen in the treaties of the United States.

Originally the words United States were looked upon as plural. Today the words stand for a single Nation. For example, in the treaty with Great Britain in 1814, it said, "The United States of America engage to put an end to hostilities with the Indians with whom *they* may be at war"; whereas in the treaty with Spain at the end of the Spanish War, it said, "The United States will send back the Spanish soldiers at *its* own expense," showing that the conception now is one of one nation and not of a union of States.

Today the country is at the very zenith of its prosperity. Three years ago in the passage of the Federal Reserve Act we proclaimed our financial independence from a banking point of view, and we now have our Federal Reserve banks, one comprising all of New England; and in those banks we have millions on millions of gold as a reserve fund to protect the people of the United States if they ever need it in time of banking trouble. Do you realize what these twelve great reserve banks mean? You hear people talk of the great central reserve banks in Europe, but do you realize how much larger our reserve banks are than any of those in Europe? Our twelve Federal Reserve banks have more gold in their vaults than are contained in the vaults of the Bank of England, the Bank of France, and the Bank of Italy combined. The Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago has in its district a population of over twelve million people, a greater population than Norway, Sweden and Switzerland combined. The Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco has in its district an area so great that you could put into it all Great Britain — England, Scotland and Ireland — all of France — I am speaking, of course, of continental France — all continental Italy, and throw in the whole of the continental German Empire and then you will have left an area as large as New England, excepting only the State of Maine. That will give you an idea as to the size and power of these banks.

The National banks are the stockholders of those Federal banks. The assets of the National banks today exceed by five billion dollars the assets of the Bank of England, the Bank of France, the Reichsbank of Germany, the Bank of Spain, the Banks of Denmark, Sweden and Japan. We have five billions more of assets in the National banks than all those great banks of Europe.

My friends, in the last few days, the United States has declared war upon Germany. The people of the United States are a peace-loving nation. We are slow to wrath, we are cautious in action, but when finally the United States moves, any nation against which it moves will soon learn that it moves with the strength of a giant. The present war upon which we are engaged is a just war and the arms that the people of the United States have taken up will never be laid down until the principles of democracy and justice and liberty are recognized and ratified by all nations. Some of our people were impatient, some of our people thought we should have proceeded a year or two years ago, but, my friends, remember that Abraham Lincoln was criticised because he waited until Sumter fell, and Abraham Lincoln was one of the greatest leaders the world has ever seen.

The President of the United States has been dignified, cautious and calm, but he has been resolute, and has proved his great statesmanship. The country has been preparing and when finally he called to the people of the United States to rise, the people were ready and with one acclaim they have risen to their feet; and we will be electrified in the next few months by what we see in the response of the American people to the President's call. We have got to raise, as a beginning — we propose to raise — two billion dollars by the issue of bonds, but I believe, my friends, that sum will be raised so quickly that it will not only amaze the world, it will amaze the American people themselves. We have today as Secretary of the Treasury a man, who, I believe, when the history of these times is written, will be ranked with Alexander Hamilton, and that man is William G. McAdoo. You will find our Government will be managed, and the war will be carried on, on a scale of efficiency we have never known before. The patriotism of our people, of our manufacturers, has already been manifested. When the copper producers heard that the Government wanted copper, they offered the Government all it wanted at one-half the market rate, and I could tell you many other such instances tonight. But, my friends, this war will entail many sacrifices. We have got to realize that war is a terrible instrument of destruction. Every man must make up his mind to economy. Every man must save and out of his savings support the Government in this great war for human liberty.

I believe the people of Roxbury will be true to their old traditions, they will rise up with the spirit of their forefathers: they will serve the Government, they will raise the money to support the troops of the United States, whether in the United States or in the trenches in France and Germany. Let us together pledge our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor to our great country, the United States of America.