

Log School Leaders: The Rublee Family of Sheboygan Falls

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In a previous edition of *The Researcher*, I touched upon the intellectual community of Sheboygan Falls during the early 1840s, with special attention to the progressive siblings Horace and Emeline Rublee, each of whom taught in Sheboygan County's first schoolhouse.¹

In this issue, I follow the later lives of Horace and Emeline and trace the influence that they had upon their descendants.

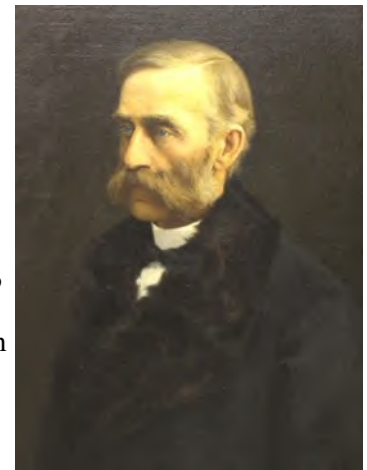
My aim is to show that their love for literature, politics, education, and independent thinking had a profound impact that reached well beyond Sheboygan Falls.

After leaving Sheboygan Falls in 1849, Horace Rublee enrolled at the University of Wisconsin—Madison, which had been founded the previous year. A year later he returned to Sheboygan Falls, where he resumed his post as schoolteacher for two years. Afterwards, he headed back to Madison where he resumed his studies and supported himself by working as a legislative reporter for the Madison *Argus* and *Democrat*. In 1853, he quit school to devote his energy entirely to the *Wisconsin State Journal*, and soon he assumed co-ownership of the paper. It was at this time that Horace was able to combine his gift for journalism with his interest in politics. With the disintegration of the Whig party, Rublee met with other Whig members at Ripon, where on March 20, 1854, they founded the State Republican Party. Their platform aimed to promote the abolition movement and advance civic virtues and honorable conduct in politics.

In 1857, Horace married Catherine Hopkins, a native of New York (b. January 1, 1833, d. April 21, 1921). They would have three children: Katherine Rublee (b. October 8, 1858, d. July 14, 1876), William Alvah Rublee (b. March 16, 1861, d. April 15, 1910), and George C. Rublee (b. July 7, 1868, d. April 26, 1957).

It was while raising his young children that Horace served as the Wisconsin State Librarian (1856-1858) and Curator of the Wisconsin Historical Society (1857-1871). He also became the Republican Party Chair from 1859-1869, and in 1868, while running as a candidate for the U.S. Senate, he served as delegate to the Republican National Convention. In 1869, President Ulysses S. Grant appointed Rublee as Minister to Switzerland, a post that he held with great success until 1876.² Sadly, while living abroad, Horace and Catherine suffered the loss of their daughter Katherine, who died of diphtheria while in Dresden, Germany.

After returning to the United States, Horace served an additional three years as Chair of the Republican Party. In 1878, he went east to assume the editorship of the *Boston Ad-*



*Painting of Horace Rublee
by Ralph Clarkson*

¹Horace and Emeline came with their mother Martha (nee: Kent) and sister Catherine (b. August 6, 1838, d. September 11, 1856) to Sheboygan Falls from Berkshire, Vermont in 1840, a year after their father, Alva, had arrived. Another sibling Jane Lucy Rublee (b. August 20, 1842, d. August 17, 1898) was born in Wisconsin two years before their father Alva died (May 13, 1844). She married James Van der Made (b. October 1, 1836, d. December 28, 1900), and they moved to Minnesota. After Alva's death, Martha Rublee married Adonikam Farrow, her husband's business partner and settler from Maine (b. 1801, d. June 2, 1865). The Rublee and Kent families have a long and distinguished intellectual pedigree in New England. Their ancestors include town representatives, theologians, legislators, and judges. The photograph of the Sheboygan Falls schoolhouse appeared in Carl Zillier, *History of Sheboygan County, Wisconsin, Past and Present*. Vol. 1 (Chicago: S. J. Clark, 1912), pp. 134-135.

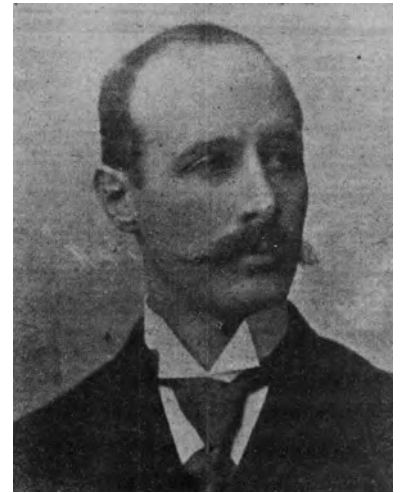
²Rublee was instrumental in getting the United Kingdom to settle on the *Alabama* claims and in establishing an international gold standard. The Minister position forced him to sell his portion of the *Wisconsin State Journal*.

³Many German Catholics and Lutherans attacked Rublee's *Sentinel* for its support of the controversial Bennett Law and what they felt to be its secular view on matters of religion. According to his wishes, he was cremated and his ashes were interred beside his daughter at Forest Home Cemetery in Milwaukee. His home in Milwaukee still stands at 1223 North Prospect Avenue.

vertiser, but he returned a year later, at which time he purchased, and became the editor of, the Milwaukee *Sentinel*. He kept this position, not always without controversy³, and lived among Milwaukee's fashionable elite until his death on October 19, 1896.

His two surviving sons lived equally influential lives. William Rublee was sent east to attend Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire. Afterwards, he attended Harvard University and he graduated in 1883 with a degree in French and German. He then entered Harvard Law School, finishing in 1885. William then returned to Milwaukee and worked as a political editor for the Milwaukee *Sentinel*, soon becoming its Vice President and Director. On June 6, 1890, President Benjamin Harrison appointed Rublee as Consul General of the United States to Prague (then in Bohemia). He retired on November 9, 1893.

On October 7, 1896, William married Katherine Smith Rogers (b. October 4, 1878, d. May 19, 1959) in Milwaukee. The couple had three children: Horace Rublee (b. September 11, 1898, d. September 12, 1985), Alva Frances Rublee (b. February 11, 1905, d. July 12, 1910), and Laura Christine Rublee (b. May 13, 1908, d. May 6, 1986). It is during this period that President McKinley and later Theodore Roosevelt appointed him as Consul General at Hong Kong (March 2, 1901), Havana, Cuba (September 15, 1902),⁵ Vienna, Austria (March 26, 1903), and then again at Hong Kong (May 17, 1909). Sadly, William Rublee died while in Hong Kong at the young age of forty-nine.⁶



William A. Rublee⁴



Juliet Barrett Rublee

The following year, Victor Morawetz invited George to New York to practice law in his firm, which then counted J. P. Morgan as its chief client. Morgan was in the process of creating U.S. Steel. By 1901, shrewd investments allowed George and Juliet to retire in their early thirties. They moved to Europe where they enveloped themselves in European elite society; George even became the King of Sweden's favorite tennis partner. When they left Europe in 1904, George returned to practice law with Morawetz. A few years later, the couple purchased a home in Cornish, New Hampshire, which at that time was associated with the Cornish Art Colony, and considered the "American Athens," an artistic and literary mecca.

Under the William Taft administration, George Rublee worked with Louis Brandeis (namesake of Brandeis University), but his allegiance to the new Progressive Party severed his relation to Brandeis, a Democrat, and so in 1912, George became a speechwriter for President Roosevelt. Two years later he became an important lobbyist for anti-trust legislation. He persuaded Woodrow Wilson to support a portion of the Federal Trade Act that empowered the commission to prosecute unfair methods of competition. Wilson nominated George Rublee as one of the first five Commissioners, but the Congress blocked the appointment for political reasons. Not long afterwards, Wilson made Rublee a member of the Federal Trade Commission. George's wife Juliet was equally progressive. On May 19, 1914, she served as the Grand Marshal for the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage's march on Washington.



George Rublee in 1914, courtesy of the Library of Congress

⁴The photograph appeared in the *Minneapolis Journal*, March 8, 1901.

⁵He replaced Edward S. Bragg, four-time Congressman and former Wisconsin Governor, perhaps most famous for commanding the Iron-Brigade during the Civil War. Rublee's salary for the Havana post was about \$7000 per year, roughly \$183,000 today.

⁶He died on April 15, 1910 of peritonitis. His wife remarried to Elias Fassett Dunlevy (b. September 12, 1861, d. May 10, 1939). They moved to California where they had a daughter, Deirdre Dunlevy (b. June 27, 1912, d. March 28, 2005). The family then moved to Denver, Colorado.