

Log School Leaders: The Rublee Family of Sheboygan Falls

by Scott Noegel

Citation: "Log School Leaders: The Rublee Family of Sheboygan Falls (Part 2)." In *The Researcher: The Newsletter of the Sheboygan County Historical Research Center*, 24/5 (2014), 3, 6-7

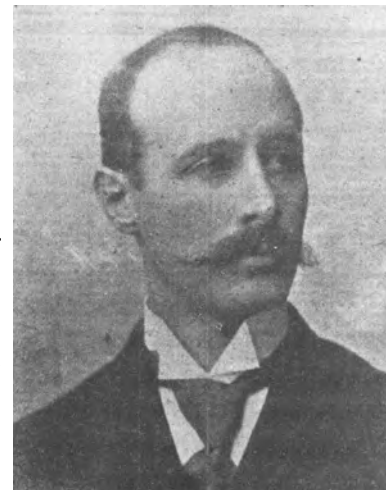
Editor's Note— Portions of this article are appearing a second time due to an error by SCHRC. Our apologies to the author and the readers.

In the April newsletter we learned about Horace Rublee and his work with education in the county and the state of Wisconsin. Rublee and wife, Catherine Hopkins Rublee, had two sons who survived to adulthood. They were William and George and they led equally influential lives. Here we begin anew.

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 Rublee

William's brother, George Rublee, was an equally ambitious intellectual and he followed in his father's progressive footsteps. He too attended Phillips Exeter Academy and he was the first and only graduate of the Groton School in 1886. He then took his BA at Harvard University, and his LLB at the Harvard Law School. Upon graduation, George taught law at Harvard until 1895, when he began practicing law in New York. However, in 1894 he moved to Milwaukee to assist his ailing father. After his father died, he again practiced law in Chicago, where, on January 12, 1899, he met and married Juliet Barrett, a wealthy free thinking socialite who had attended Miss Porter's School in Farmington, Connecticut, and who had become very active in the modern dance and early feminist movements.

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.



Juliet Barrett Rublee

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.⁷ Not long afterwards, Wilson made Rublee a member of the Federal Trade Commission.⁸

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.

In 1915, Juliet was an American delegate at the Peace Congress held at The Hague. Ger-



Juliet Rublee as Grand Marshal, courtesy of the Library of Congress

many considered her such a political threat that they barred her from entering Germany and Belgium.

She also was a close personal friend of Margaret Sanger,⁹ who later regarded Juliet as responsible more than any other person for the success of the birth control movement. When World War I broke out, she picketed outside the White House in support of U.S. neutrality. Yet, her interests went well beyond politics. In 1925, she funded and led an expedition for sunken treasure in the Mediterranean Sea, and in 1932, she funded and produced the first U.S. feature film made entirely in Mexico, *Flame of Mexico*.¹⁰

In 1938, George became the Director of the Inter-governmental Committee on Political Refugees Coming from Germany, a post that demanded a great deal of sensitivity, especially in the light of his Wisconsin roots. He tried to negotiate with the Nazi government to allow Jews to emigrate along with some of their property,

but the negotiations failed, and so Rublee resigned his post. The next year he sponsored a bill that would allow for the admission of 20,000 Jewish refugee children to the United States, but Congress rejected the bill. His intellectual proclivities interested the newspapers who said of him: "When he is not absorbed in some ticklish international problem around the clock he plays golf or reads the Greek dramatists for relaxation."¹¹

George Rublee's political and personal life was far more involved than I can describe here. Yet, even this cursory treatment illustrates his contributions to social, political, and economic life. George Rublee credited his father Horace for his progressive outlook and his interest in education and politics.¹²

Horace's sister Emeline Julia Rublee (b. February 16, 1836, d. June 26, 1920) married George T. Cole (b. October 3, 1832, d. September 22, 1903), the son of Charles D. Cole, who was once described as "liberal in his views regarding religion... never associated with any church. A man of broad views... unquestionably its (Sheboygan County's) most prominent and influential citizen."¹³ He also attended Beloit College and served as a Democrat representative at State conventions.¹⁴



Emeline Rublee, ca. 1855

Emeline was an intellectual well engaged with civic affairs. An early paper remembered her as follows: "In her earlier days, before marriage, she taught school, and throughout her life was a great reader, always keeping in touch with matters of public interest, both local and national, and only the day before her death made anxious inquiry regarding the Democratic National convention at San Francisco."¹⁵



Rublee A. Cole, 1883

Though social realities did not allow Emeline to become a player on the national stage, like Horace, she enjoyed a strong intellectual life and passion for literature and education that greatly influenced her children: Rublee A. Cole (b. March 4, 1862, d. July 3, 1907) and Jessie Martha Cole (b. July 8, 1866, d. October 10, 1947).

Rublee A. Cole graduated in law from the University of Wisconsin at Madison in 1883. Afterwards, he first moved to Washburn, and then to Ashland, where he practiced law and served as a Collecting Agent and Notary Public.

Soon he relocated to Portage, where he met and married Janet M. MacDonald (b. April 9, 1863, d. December 26, 1927). After their marriage, the couple moved to Milwaukee, where Rublee continued his work as a lawyer. In one of his more famous cases, he successfully litigated against the Illinois Steel Company for illegally evicting some 200 residents from their properties on Jones Island in Milwaukee.

Early in his career, Rublee Cole was active in the Republican Party. He was a strong supporter of Governor Robert La Follette in his advocacy of minority rights and women's right to vote. Like La Follette, he increasingly viewed the Republican Party as

manipulated by industry and the railroads, and as abandoning its anti-slavery origins. Disenchanted, Rublee became a Democrat, and in 1896, he was elected as Lieutenant Governor of the Wisconsin Democratic Party. However, at the state convention his nomination was dropped, mainly because he opposed the Prohibition movement, which he saw as an attack on German communities. He tried to protest the move, but he was shouted down at the convention.

Rublee's wife Janet also was active in education and politics. She was the first licensed teacher in Prentice,¹⁶ and she became the Chairperson of the State Federation of Women's Clubs. In this role she helped pass legislation that allowed women to vote on matters pertaining to school officers. She also championed the admittance of African Americans into the Club.

Rublee Cole continued to work as an attorney until 1905, when he became a police justice for West Allis. On July 3, 1907, Rublee Cole died following a two-week illness. He was only forty-five.

Emeline Cole's daughter, Jessie Cole, also had strong interests in literature and education, and like her brother Rublee, she attended the University of Wisconsin at Madison and graduated in 1888.

However, there were fewer options for women at this time, so Jessie returned to Sheboygan County and taught Latin and German at Plymouth High School. She was a leading member of the Plymouth chapter of the Daughters of the American Republic, the Plymouth Women's Club, County Educational Board, Committee on Common Schools, and twice elected to the County School Commission. By 1902, she was serving as the Assistant Principal of Plymouth High School at which time she declined a nomination for County Superintendent of Schools. She later became an honorary member of the Plymouth High School Alumni Association. In addition, she was a shrewd businesswoman and bought and sold a number of properties.¹⁷ Jessie Cole never married. She died on October 10, 1947.



Jessie M. Cole, 1888

Horace and Emeline Rublee's convictions and intellectual endeavors had a lasting impact in their communities and upon the lives of their children, each of whom became influential figures in politics and education. It is inspiring to think that one can trace the educational, political, and material successes of their descendants back to such humble beginnings in the nascent wooded village of Sheboygan Falls.

End Notes

⁷George Rublee had acted as a campaign manager against the Republican Senator Jacob Gallinger of New Hampshire, who took personal offense to his appointment.

⁸For his own account, see George Rublee, "The Original Plan and Early History of the Federal Trade Commission," *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science in the City of New York* 11/1 (1926), pp. 114-120.

⁹The photograph of Juliet above is addressed to Margaret Sanger, courtesy of the Margaret Sanger Papers. Juliet also aided the birth control movement with her personal fortune.

¹⁰It took three years to complete the film, and though it was the height of the Great Depression, she spent \$150,000 to make it, nearly \$5,000,000 by today's standards. The film is set during the Mexican Revolution, but it addresses contemporary U.S.-Mexico policy with regard to oil laws. Unlike most American films at the time, she cast the American character, an oil investor name Thornton, as the villain. See Isabel Arrendondo, "From Travelogues to Political Intervention in Juliet Barrett Rublee's *Flame of Mexico*," *Mexican Studies* 26 (2010), pp. 79-93.

¹¹*Dunkirk (New York) Evening Observer*, December 28, 1938.

¹²See Marc Eric McClure, *Earnest Endeavors: The Life and Public Work of George Rublee* (Greenwood Publishing Group: Westport CT., 2003), pp. 6-7.

¹³*Portrait and Biographical Record of Sheboygan County, Wisconsin* (Chicago: Excelsior Publishing Company, 1894), p. 696. Cole also was the county's first Post Master and Register of Deeds.

¹⁴He did not finish his studies at Beloit College. See *Wisconsin Weekly Advocate*, September 24, 1903.

¹⁵Untitled obituary at the SCHRC dated June 26, 1920.

¹⁶She also wrote the entry on "Price County" in *The History of Price County and Prentice Wisconsin*, 1884.

¹⁷E.g., in 1915, she sold a lot on the southwest corner of 16th Street and Huron for \$1000, about \$24,000 by today's standard.