

Hoffman, William Mooney, John Onderdonk, Anthony Post, Jonathan Post, William Pitt Smith, Melancthon Smith, Ebenezer Stevens, and James Tyler ; treasurer, Thomas Ash ; secretary, John Swartwout.”<sup>1</sup>

The fact that many deep-seated prejudices and unjust judgments have been born of opinions long current among people who have accepted them without questioning their authenticity, or of published statements regarded as valid, it is no easy task to change such beliefs and impressions by the presentation of testimony showing their falsity and unreasonableness. Innuendoes and insinuations are of a similar weedy nature and widely disseminate seeds of detraction and defamation. Rash and intemperate men have been the blatant authors of unwarranted assertions and imputations in all ages of the world, and bans of condemnation and reproach have not infrequently disgraced guiltless persons.

The career of John Swartwout as a popular leader of the republican-democratic party did not escape the criticism of his opponents, who unscrupulously defamed his political affiliations with Aaron Burr, and scornfully derided him for manifesting sympathy and good-will toward a man whom they had cause to execrate. The devotion of John Swartwout to his party was notably characterized by frank and fearless utterances of the sentiments which inspired him to uphold its principles. He was never evasive in answering an opponent, nor deceptive in his promises to a follower. Those with whom he counselled confided in his integrity ; those who sought to lessen his influence never discredited his declarations. As a friend he was steadfast and true—he failed no one in helpful offices in adversity. The following *excerpts* are regarded as summarily presenting the incidents in his career as a statesman, and as justly disclosing the character of his associations with Aaron Burr.

“ Colonel Burr’s rise to eminence in the political world was more rapid than that of any other man who has played a conspicuous part in the affairs of the United States. Over the heads of tried and able politicians, in a state where leading families had for a century nearly monopolized the offices of honor and emolument, he was advanced, in four years after fairly entering the political arena, from a private station, first to the highest honor of the bar, next to a seat in the national councils, and then to a competition with Washington, Adams, Jefferson, and Clinton for the presidency itself. This point he reached when he was but thirty-six years of age, without having originated any political idea or measure, without being fully committed to either of the two leading parties.

“ To his contemporaries, no less than to recent writers of political history, the suddenness of his elevation was an enigma. John Adams thought it was owing to the prestige of his father’s and grandfather’s name. Hamilton attributed it to Burr’s unequalled wire-pulling. Some thought it was his military

<sup>1</sup> The Old Merchants of New York City. By Walter Barrett. New York, 1864, vol., i. p. 227.