



EPAPHRODITUS SEYMOUR

The first cashier of the first bank in Brattleboro,
a hundred years ago

E-paf-ro-di-tus

EPAPHRODITUS—the original of that name—was known by the good company he kept. He was the companion of the Apostle St. Paul. A Bible dictionary translates the tongue-twisting syllables as meaning “handsome.” How well the name applied to Epaphroditus Seymour, whose portrait graces these pages, may be judged. The large and beautiful steel engraving, in brown tones, from which this reproduction was made, was hung this week in the counting room of THE VERMONT NATIONAL BANK. It was an unveiling which might well have been accompanied by public ceremony. As it was, Cashier Charles G. Staples simply dragged the picture from its storage corner in his barn on High Street, dusted it off, hung it up and went about his banking business. He left it to the present editor to celebrate the event any way he chose within rhyme or reason. Were we more liberally minded, this community might rest in its present state of ignorance as to the debt it owes Epaphroditus Seymour. But a debt is a debt, and we record it “*with interest.*”

Epaphro Seymour, (as Mr. Seymour signed it for short), was a prosperous young merchant of Guilford, whose eldest brother, Horatio Seymour, became distinguished as a lawyer in Middlebury, and for 12 years, being the Whig leader, represented Vermont in the United States Senate. Epaphro's claim to fame, less notable than his brother's, was none the less secure, for in the position of cashier and later as president of this bank, he qualified as the first prominent and *active* banker in this region.

It must have required a bit of vision on his part when, in 1814, he decided to desert the metropolis of Guilford, in part, and to establish a *country* home in Brattleboro. For a number of years prior to 1821, when the bank was founded, he maintained establishments in both places.

AN HONEST MAN

It is recalled in Miss Mary Cabot's *Annals of Brattleboro* that the community reposed the most implicit confidence in his integrity. Before the organization of savings banks and trust companies in this state, large sums of money were entrusted to his care and keeping, and in many

cases only with a simple minute noting the amount; yet for a period of more than forty years not a whisper was ever breathed against his fidelity in the discharge of any fiduciary engagement he assumed. He settled the estate of the Hon. Jonathan Hunt, as executor, without executing bonds for the faithful discharge of the trust, and the estate inventoried at a sum exceeding \$150,000.00.

He was a great admirer of a fine horse and manifested a deep interest in the improvement of the breed in Brattleboro and vicinity. He had in his stables at one time eight brood mares and colts sired by the famous Gifford Morgan. And yet one who knew him well tells us that he doubts if Epaphroditus Seymour ever himself drew rein over a horse. He took interest in their breeding, as he did everything else, just as he gave of his money to help young men to an education, from a deep sense of duty.

Further acquaintance will be made from time to time with Epaphroditus Seymour, and other ancestors of this old bank. In the meantime as a matter of accuracy it should be recalled that what was actually the first bank in the whole state of Vermont was “The Bank of

“with interest”

Burlington”, founded in 1819. This was two years prior to the time that Samuel Clark, who was then Brattleboro’s town representative, succeeded in his petition to the legislature for a charter for the bank of Brattleboro, which is now THE VERMONT NATIONAL BANK. But inasmuch as the Bank of Burlington ceased its separate existence when its stock and assets were bought out by the Merchants National Bank of that city, THE VERMONT NATIONAL BANK remains with undisputed claim with the rank of seniority among the hundred odd banks now listed in the state of Vermont.

