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OF

PROFESSOR CHARLES WALDO HASKINS, C. P. A.

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CHARLES WALDO HASKINS.

Professor Charles Waldo Haskins, C. P. A., one of the Founders, first Dean and Professor of Auditing, and of the History of Accountancy in the New York University School of Commerce, Accounts, and Finance; President of the New York State Society of Certified Public Accountants; President of the Board of Examiners appointed by the Regents of the University of the State of New York, under the Act to regulate the profession of public accountants, and widely known in professional and financial circles as senior member of the accounting firm of Haskins and Sells, of New York City, Chicago and London, was born in the Borough of Brooklyn, New York City, Jan. 11, 1852. Professor Haskins has a highly interesting ancestry, the ramifications of which extend into a number of the oldest, most patriotic and cultured families of New England. In the paternal line he is descended from Robert Haskins, of Boston, the first of the name who settled in the Colonies. There are two traditions regarding this ancestor, one being that he came from Virginia; the other, that he arrived from England with a brother, who went to Virginia while Robert remained in Boston. In 1728 Robert Haskins married Sarah, daughter of Philip Cook, of Cambridge, who bore him a son, John, born in Boston, in 1729. This ancestor of Professor Haskins was a man of note during the Revolution, and the active associate and friend of a number of the worthies most prominent in securing the independence of the Colonies. When but eighteen years of age, he was a privateersman aboard a letter-of-marque vessel bound for the West Indies and commissioned to fight against the French and Spanish, by both of whom he was taken prisoner. He foresaw the inevitable struggle between the Colonies and the crown, and prepared himself for it by taking an active interest in military affairs. At the "Lexington alarm" he was a Captain in the old Boston Regiment; and as one of the "Sons of Liberty" he was the companion and co-worker of the Adamses, Josiah Quincy, Edward Case, Joseph Warren, and other aggressive patriots. A merchant of unsullied integrity and of unusual strength of character, he was known as "Honest John Haskins." His wife, born Hannah Upham, was a great-granddaughter of Liet. Phineas Upham, of the Massachusetts contingent, who died from wounds received in King Philip's War; was descended likewise from Rose Dunster, sister of Rev. Henry Dunster, first President of Harvard, College; and, through her mother, from John Howland, one of the signers of the compact aboard the "Mayflower," and active and prominent as a colonial official and Indian fighter; and also from Capt. John Waite, who for eighteen years sat in the Massachusetts House of Deputies, and was Speaker in 1684. The great-grandfather of Professor Haskins was Robert Haskins, son of "Honest John Haskins," the patriot mentioned above; he was a prominent and successful Boston merchant. The Professor's great-grandmother, wife of Robert, was Rebecca, daughter of the Rev. William Emerson, who built the "Old Manse," made famous by Hawthorne, occupied it during the Battle of Lexington—of which he was an eye-witness, and later the annalist,—and who, after years of earnest and patriotic endeavor, finally, in 1776, laid down his life for Independence while serving as chaplain with the American army at Ticonderoga. This lady, who was named after her great-grandmother, Rebecca, daughter of Cornelius Waldo, was the aunt of Ralph Waldo Emerson, and was descended from a line of eminent divines and scholars, several of whom were among the founders of New England. Thomas Waldo Haskins, son of Robert, was the grandfather of Professor Haskins. Born in Boston, in 1801, and brought up a merchant, he became the largest hardware dealer in that city, and one of its leading citizens. By his wife, Mary Soren, he had a son, Waldo Emerson Haskins, father of the subject of this sketch. This son was born in Roxbury, Mass., in 1827; and in 1851, after completing a thorough education, he removed to New York, and engaged in the banking business with his uncle, George Soren. He married Amelia Rowan Cammeyer, daughter of
Charles Cammeyer, of New York, who bore him two children, Charles Waldo and Emma Parsons. He died in 1884. Charles Waldo Haskins, the subject of this sketch, received his primary education in private schools; and, it being the intention of his parents that he should become a civil engineer, he subsequently entered the famous Polytechnic Institute, of Brooklyn, where he was graduated in 1867. Even thus early he gave evidence of the possession of masterful qualities, and the able President of his alma mater, Dr. David H. Cochran, one of the most accomplished educators and keenest analyzers of character in America, predicted that he would "go far," i.e., achieve notable success. This prediction Professor Haskins has already verified in a goodly manner; and from the splendid coign of vantage he has won by his own unaided efforts, he is likely to go much farther in an epoch marked by such broad outlooks and giant possibilities, and calling as never before for men of trained intellect and superabundant vitality. His mastery of the higher mathematics while at college seems to have given him a taste for accountancy; and after graduation, instead of taking up civil engineering, he served an apprenticeship of five years in the accounting department of the old and well-known importing house of Frederick Butterfield & Co., in New York City. At the conclusion of this experience he made a tour of Europe, and while abroad spent about two years in the schools of Paris. Upon returning to New York he entered Wall Street, forming a connection with the banking and brokerage firm of his father, Waldo Emerson Haskins, his intention being to become a member of the New York Stock Exchange. A serious view, however, of the growing importance of accountancy in respect to modern business conditions, decided him to devote himself permanently to this department of commercial and financial activity, which on the continent of Europe had already attained to the dignity of a profession. Entering the accounting department of the North River Construction Company, then building the New York, West Shore, and Buffalo Railway, he soon had supervision of the construction accounts of the company. Upon the completion of the "West Shore" he became its General Bookkeeper and Auditor of Disbursements; and when the road was absorbed by the "New York Central," in 1886, he entered the profession of public accountancy upon his own responsibility. In the prosecution of his professional work he has held, incidentally, several important administrative offices; among them, the Secretaryship of the Manhattan Trust Company, and of the Old Dominion Construction Company; the Comptrollership of the Central of Georgia Railway, of the Ocean Steamship Company, and of the Chesapeake and Western Railroad, and the Receivership of the Augusta Mining and Investment Company. In 1893 Mr. Haskins and the gentleman who is now his business partner, Mr. Elijah Watt Sells, were appointed experts under the Joint Commission of the Fifty-third Congress to revise the accounting system of the United States. This signal recognition of their professional ability instantly confirmed their reputation, already national through the importance of the work they had individually performed. Among the many compliments their successful labors in this duty evoked was one from Senator Redfield Proctor, of Vermont, who had spent much time with them in going over the details of their work, and who declared in the United States Senate, on July 15, 1894, that "these experts are men thoroughly competent, experienced, and skilful, and have been extremely careful and conservative in their methods." Messrs. Haskins & Sells accomplished this enormous and important task so successfully and so ably that their recommendations were adopted. The new methods they suggested were put into immediate operation, and their work was officially praised and attested by all of the accounting officers of the Government Departments after the radical innovations in pre-existing methods adopted upon their suggestion had been in practical operation for a sufficiently long period to render a judicial judgment upon them possible. Not the least important result achieved was a saving to the Government of more than six hundred thousand dollars annually. The following official communication speaks for itself:
Office of the Joint Commission of Congress to inquire into the Status of Laws Organizing the Executive Departments.

WASHINGTON, D.C., March 2, 1895.

MESSRS. C. W. HASKINS, and E. W. SELLS,
Experts under the Joint Commission, etc.:

GENTLEMEN:—In concluding the work of this Commission, it affords me special pleasure to express to you appreciation of the valuable services you have rendered. To your rare business capacity, and peculiar adaptation to analyzing old and formulating plans for new methods, in great measure is due the credit for the reorganization of the accounting system of the United States Government. It was in many respects the most extensive and important undertaking of the kind in the history of the country, and its success, in expediting and simplifying the public business without removing any of the necessary safeguards has been fully demonstrated and attested by all of the officials affected thereby.

Very respectfully,
(Signed) ALEX. M. DOCKERY,
Chairman, Joint Commission.

In 1895 Mr. Haskins and Mr. Sells effected a business partnership under the style of Haskins & Sells, with offices at 30 Broad Street, New York. More recently a branch office has been opened in Chicago; and, still later, another in London. Prior to the adoption of the charter consolidating the cities of Brooklyn and New York, Mr. Haskins was placed at the head of the committee of experts to examine the accounts of the former. At the close of the Spanish-American War his firm was selected by the United States authorities to investigate the finances of the City of Havana, and, later, the accounts of the Island of Cuba. The firm also has been several times engaged by the city government of New York to supervise the investigation of irregularities in the various municipal departments; and has had numerous important engagements revising and improving the methods of accounting in a number of corporations, institutions and municipalities. Early in 1901 the Treasury Department of the United States Government engaged the firm to examine and report upon the system of accounts of the Bureau of the Mint, with a view to making a complete revision thereof; and in the same year the City of Chicago awarded contracts to it, first for the investigation of the special assessment accounts of that municipality from the date of the Great Fire of 1871 to March 1st, 1901, and secondly, for the introduction and establishment of a scientific system of keeping these accounts in the future. In an able paper entitled, “New York University and Practical Economics,” published in Harper’s Weekly, Sept. 29, 1900, Professor Haskins declares that “the cause of higher commercial education may be said to have been first taken seriously throughout the United States upon the appearance, about seven years ago, of a report of Professor Edward James, who, at the invitation of the American-Bankers’ Association, had visited the leading European schools of commerce, and made a personal investigation of their organization and work.” This report, emanating from the principal authority on the subject in this country, was published by the government and excited much interest. In the State of New York the professional accountants of reputation inaugurated a movement which resulted in the passage, in 1896, of an Act to regulate the profession of public accountants. Under the provisions of this act, which legally recognized and safeguarded the profession, a Board of Examiners was appointed by the Regents. Of this Board Mr. Haskins was chosen President, and in the spirit of the legislative enactment he, together with his colleagues, placed the requirements of the examination upon such an educational basis as would insure to the profession of certified public accountancy the confidence and respect of the commercial and financial world. Under the Act he himself was accorded by the Regents the status or Degree of Certified Public Accountant. Together with others in the State who had obtained the legal right to this title he organized in 1900 the New York State Society of Certified Public Accountants, and was at once elected its President. But his success thus far in raising the standard and enhancing the dignity of his profession only served to confirm his resolution to labor to place it on a plane with the most honored. He knew by long and varied experience that it was in large part a public function, and he saw no reason why it should not have the same status as
law and medicine. Its proper prosecution demanded an essentially scientific training; and believing
that this could best be obtained under the wing of an established educational institution of university
character, he directed his energies to achieving this result. His personal efforts and public utterances
were unremitting in this direction, and the agitation culminated in a decision of the Council of New
York University to establish such a college or school as was demanded. On July 28, 1900, as Presi-
dent of the State Society, Mr. Haskins received from the Chancellor of New York University, the
official approval of the Council, legalizing the foundation of the institution, under the title of the New
York University School of Commerce, Accounts and Finance. Mr. Haskins was called to fill the
Chairs of Auditing and History of Accountancy; and upon the organization of the Faculty, he was
honored by being chosen Dean. In 1900, while abroad, Professor Haskins devoted considerable at-
tention to the study of European accountancy, as connected with the higher commercial education.
Since his return he has on numerous occasions addressed gatherings and conventions of educators
and professional accountants on this and cognate themes. His delvings into the history of accountancy
have brought to light many interesting and valuable facts, and these, together with his views and ex-
periences, have been embodied in his philosophical and historical papers. These latter, as well as his
addresses, have been published and widely circulated. As a writer Professor Haskins is lucid, schol-
arly and convincing; and his effusions in any form or upon any topic are original and interesting,
and show a wide acquaintance with the classics and the best European as well as British and Ameri-
can authors. Although occupied so fully by his professional labor—much of which is really of a
public nature—Professor Haskins has taken a deep interest in political affairs, and has been outspoken
and active in the support of good government, particularly in the city of New York. While his affi-
liations have been Democratic, he has carefully preserved his independence, and is esteemed by mem-
bers of all parties for his incorruptible character. He has no itching for public office; and when
spoken to on the subject on one or two occasions, declared unhesitatingly that he would not care to
be chosen Mayor, as it would remove him from what he considered his especial field. This very re-
mark, however, has led to his being mentioned frequently in connection with the nomination for the
Comptrollership of the City of New York, an office for which he possesses in an unusual degree all
the essential qualifications, and many of the popular requisites; as, besides his well-tested capacity and
integrity, he is a man of great personal magnetism, kindly, cordial and hearty in his manner, pos-
sessing such a combination of social, professional and physical characteristics as easily secures gen-
eral public endorsement at the polls. Of stalwart physique Professor Haskins has a decided taste for
the "strenuous life." He has traveled in all parts of the United States and Europe, and is a fair lin-
guist, speaking the French, German and Italian languages. Strange as it may appear, this devotee
of figures and finance has a natural artistic taste, which was so well marked in youth that it led him to
study art under the best auspices in Europe. Several of his early productions, still preserved, show
decided ability. Besides being connected with the societies already mentioned, Professor Haskins is
an Honorary Member of the Association of American Railway Accounting Officers of the United
States. He has taken an active part in the work of organizing a number of patriotic societies, and has
been Treasurer-General of the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution. He is a mem-
ber also of the Society of Mayflower Descendants, of the Society of Colonial Wars, of the Military
Order of Foreign Wars, and of the Manhattan, Democratic, Riding, Country, Westchester, and New
York Yacht Clubs of New York; of the Metropolitan Club, of Washington, D. C., and of the Piedmont
Club of Atlanta, Georgia. Professor Haskins married in his thirty-third year, Miss Henrietta Have-
meyer, of the old and wealthy Havemeyer family, of New York. This lady's father was Albert Have-
meyer, a leading citizen and merchant of New York, and her uncle was the Hon. William F. Havemeyer,
New York's most popular Mayor, and twice the incumbent of that high office. With the refinement of
true breeding Mrs. Haskins is devoted to her home, and to the care and supervision of the education
of her children—two beautiful daughters, Ruth and Noeline, both now of school age—and with winning
grace she dispenses cordial hospitality in the fine old mansion on West 14th Street, New York, in which
she was born, which came to her from her father, and to which she clings with affection.