

SARAH JOHNSON PRICHARD

"Her whole life, practically, was spent in her native city, and few, if any, of its people had so genuine a love for its history as Miss Prichard."

— Waterbury American, February 23, 1909

Sarah Johnson Prichard, born in Waterbury on January 11, 1830, was a talented writer; comfortable with composing fiction or non-fiction. She lived in downtown Waterbury on the southeast corner of Bank and Grand Streets. Prichard received her early education at the Waterbury Academy, later entered the Dwight Place Seminary in New Haven and, in 1849, graduated from the Willard Seminary in Troy, N.Y.

Prichard's first published article, describing her travels from Niagara to the north, appeared in the Waterbury American in 1853. Also in that year, her essay about the first burial in the new Riverside Cemetery was printed in the same newspaper. Her first book, *Martha's Hooks and Eyes*, was published in 1860. She wrote twelve lively, historical children's stories, many based on Waterbury people and places. It was written that through her stories and tales "she has thrown fresh sunlight into many a young life." Prichard had numerous pieces appear in such publications as *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Evening Post*, *The New York Tribune* and *St. Nicholas*.

In 1887, she was commissioned by Joseph Anderson to write the beginning section of his *Town and City of Waterbury*. For nine years she researched and wrote a meticulous story of Waterbury from "the first coming of the white man to the close of the Revolutionary War". Her narrative describes how Waterbury became one of the leading cities in Connecticut.

This gentle woman who loved animals wrote impassioned letters to the editor of the Waterbury newspapers when she felt an injustice was being done to the citizens of her city. When the legislature voted to turn the neglected ancient burying ground on Grand Street over to the City of Waterbury for use as a park or other public purpose, she was one of the few residents who vehemently objected. When the act was ratified by Waterbury residents in 1890, she sent a fervent plea to the newspapers begging citizens to preserve the old graveyard. The City prevailed and a portion of the land was granted to the Silas Bronson Library.

Prichard, who died on February 23, 1909, had an abiding interest in Waterbury, both past and present and she was the authority on local history from major issues to obscure points. Sarah Prichard's vivid writing style made Waterbury history come alive and it has enhanced the lives of Waterburians of all ages.

