

John Adams Dix

(1798–1879)

A man of many and diverse accomplishments, John Adams Dix distinguished himself during a long public career. Born in Boscaawen, New Hampshire, Dix saw military service in both the War of 1812 and the Civil War. He read law and was admitted to the bar in Washington, D.C., in 1824.

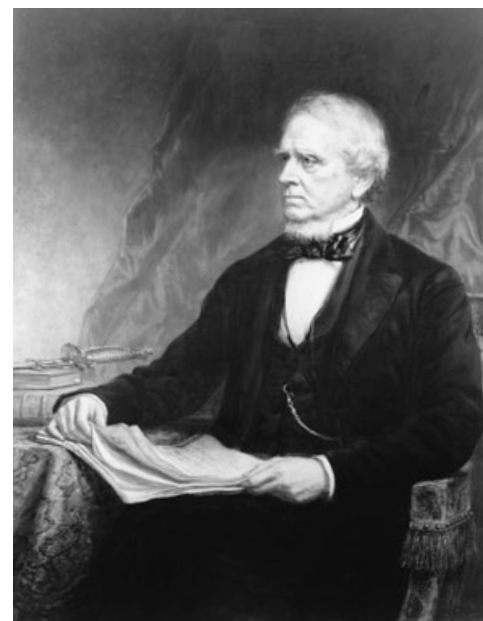
Dix moved to Albany, New York, in 1830 and became active in state politics. A Jacksonian Democrat and member of the so-called Albany Regency, he was later appointed adjutant general and secretary of state for New York. He was then elected to complete the unexpired term in the U.S. Senate of Silas Wright, Jr., and served from 1845 to 1849. An outspoken abolitionist, he ran unsuccessfully for New York State governor as a Free Soil candidate in 1848.

Dix then entered the business world, serving at various times as president of several railroads, including the Mississippi & Missouri and the Union Pacific. In 1861 President James Buchanan named Dix secretary of the treasury. During the Civil War, Dix served in the Union army, rising to major general. From 1866 to 1869 he was American minister to France. Although a Democrat, Dix gained the Republican nomination for governor of New York and won, filling that post from 1873 to 1875. He spent his final years in New York City. A classical scholar, Dix translated several ancient Latin texts for private circulation; many volumes of his speeches and travel reminiscences also were published. Fort Dix, New Jersey, is named in his honor.

Painter Imogene Morrell created her life-size portrait of John Adams Dix several years after the statesman's death. While the inspiration for her painting is unknown, it bears a striking resemblance to Daniel Huntington's 1879 portrait of Dix (located at the New-York Historical Society). An engraving by Alexander Hay Ritchie, after the Huntington portrait, appears in the two-volume book, *Memoirs of John Adams Dix*, compiled in 1883 by the subject's son, Morgan Dix.

Morrell's paintings of Dix and a larger-than-life image of former President James Garfield were the subject of a lengthy petition addressed to Senator John Sherman, chairman of the Joint Committee on the Library. Some 30 signers of the petition, including senators and representatives, called for the purchase of the two paintings. The petition, now in the National Archives, refers to the Dix portrait as "carefully drawn and painted," stating that "every muscle and vein shows the highest degree of artistic finish." The acquisition of Morrell's works was urged both because of her contributions to the "scientific study and practice of Art in this Country" and because of her subjects' historical importance. The disposition of the Garfield picture is unknown, but the Joint Committee on the Library acquired the likeness of Dix in 1883.

A respected painter of historical subjects, Morrell studied in Dusseldorf and Paris. She lived in Washington, D.C., from 1877 until her death in 1908. She exhibited works at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition in 1876, and in 1879 helped establish the National Academy of Fine Arts in Washington, D.C.



This 1879 painting of John Adams Dix by Daniel Huntington is thought to have served as a model for the Senate's portrait of the senator by Imogene Morrell.

(Collection of the New-York Historical Society)

John Adams Dix

Imogene Robinson Morrell (ca. 1818-1908)

Oil on canvas, 1883

48¾ x 38¾ inches (123.8 x 98.4 cm)

Signed and dated (lower left corner): Imogene ROBINSON MORRELL. / 1883

Purchased by the Joint Committee on the Library, 1883

Cat. no. 32.00014

