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Charles Merriam, second son of Dan Merriam, was born in West Brookfield, Massachusetts, November 21, 1806. He married (first) August 11, 1835, Sophia Eleanor, daughter of Solomon Warriner, born at Springfield, June 14, 1808, died July 9, 1887. His marriage was May 8, 1860, at Detroit, Michigan, to Rachel White Capen, widow of Dr. Gray, born April 5, 1824, died August 27, 1899. There were six children, five by the first marriage, one by the second; only two of these children are living.

Charles Merriam received his education in the public schools of Brookfield, and academies of Mendon and Hadley. He was apprenticed at an early age to a printer, William Goodwin, of Hartford, Connecticut, and afterwards to E. & G. Merriam, of Brookfield. After his apprenticeship ceased he taught school for a time, then spent a few years in Boston in the printing office of T. R. Marvin. In 1831 he received a letter from Rev. Dr. Osgood, pastor of the leading church in Springfield, urging him to come to that city and start a newspaper, as he had been recommended by the Brookfield Congregational pastor for such an undertaking. This led Charles to go to Springfield with his elder brother George and look over the field. Though not satisfied with it as a journalistic opening, they decided that it would be a good place for the book business, in which they engaged there for several years. This eventually led them to acquire the plates and copyright of Noah Webster's dictionaries. In 1832 the firm became G. & C. Merriam. After forty-five years of active business life, Charles retired, in 1877. Charles Merriam was very generous, bestowing large gifts at times to deserving causes. To the Springfield Public Library he gave thousands of dollars. To his native town, West Brookfield, he gave a beautiful library building, and donated funds for the purchase of books. He died July 9, 1887.