

Indiana regiment of infantry, and served one year in the war with Mexico. After returning to Indiana he taught school in Shelbyville and studied law in the office of Hon. Thomas A. Hendricks. He removed to Bloomfield, Iowa, and there was admitted to the bar in 1850. The same year, and also in 1852, he was elected county attorney of Davis county. He was a Democrat of the old school, was nominated and elected state senator in 1856. In 1861 he took a leading part in the organization of the Third Iowa Cavalry of which he was made Lieutenant-Colonel. In a desperate charge at Pea Ridge, March 7, 1862, he received a wound in the face, the effects of which obliged him to resign his command. He was elected to the district bench after his return and recovery, serving four years. He was an unsuccessful candidate of the Democratic party for judge of the Supreme Court in 1865, as he was for Congress against Samuel R. Curtis in 1858, and against William Loughridge in 1872. He was a delegate at large to the National Democratic Convention in St. Louis in 1876, when Samuel J. Tilden and Thomas A. Hendricks were nominated for President and Vice-President. He was a delegate at the convention of 1880 which nominated Gen. Winfield S. Hancock, and in 1884 was a delegate at large to the convention which nominated Grover Cleveland. He was unanimously nominated as the Democratic candidate for Governor of Iowa in 1879. He promoted the construction of the railroad which is now the Wabash line from Bloomfield to Ottumwa, and in 1878 became attorney for the Burlington road, serving with peculiar ability for the remainder of his very active life. In 1881 he was made general attorney for the road, and the next year removed to Keokuk, where his residence thereafter remained. He was a famous trial lawyer. Among his achievements are judgments in some of the most famous criminal battles in the history of southeastern Iowa. He was successful in his connection with the noted Andrew J. Davis will case in the courts of Butte, Montana. He was a large landowner, was the president of a number of banking institutions and the promoter of fine stock breeding. He was of spare build, tall, and in his later years apparently frail. In conserving his health, he resolved his habits into an almost mechanical system of outdoor exercise, and thus he considered that he preserved and prolonged both his physical and mental powers much beyond the period when both might have been expected to have broken. He delighted in the open fields and was a champion with dog and gun. He was a member of the Beta Theta Pi in his college days, and of the Masonic Order.

---

WILLIAM F. BRANNAN was born in Washington, D. C., September 24, 1824; he died at Muscatine, Iowa, February 12, 1910. His parents were John and Mary (McLeod) Brannan, natives of Ireland. He received his early education at McLeod's Academy, continuing there after entering the office of the *Globe* as an apprentice at the age of sixteen. In 1843 he removed to Hagerstown, Maryland, near which place he taught in the public schools and later as a tutor in private families. Here he began the study of law, and in 1846 was admitted to the bar. He became a partner in the *Hagerstown Mail*, editing that paper until his appointment as auditor of the court of chancery in 1853. He removed to Muscatine, Iowa, in 1855, and

entered the practice of the law. In 1858 he was nominated by the Democrats and elected the first county superintendent of schools. He served one term and declined renomination. He was appointed a trustee of the University of Iowa about this time and was one of the earliest and most effective advocates of co-education. In 1868 he was a delegate, and in 1884 a delegate and vice-president, of the Democratic National Convention. He was nominated by his party for Congress in the early seventies, and was barely defeated in his district which was strongly Republican. Upon the unanimous recommendation of the bar of Muscatine, in 1872, Governor Carpenter, a Republican, appointed Judge Brannan, a Democrat, to fill a vacancy on the district bench. At the end of his first term, on his refusal to become a partisan candidate, both parties placed his name on their tickets. He was elected, and the wholesome precedent of elevating the bench above partisanship has since been followed in the seventh judicial district. Judge Brannan resigned and re-entered the practice before the expiration of his term, continuing until 1886 when he was returned to the bench. He was nominated in 1869 and again in 1884 for supreme judge, but both times failed to overcome the great Republican majorities. On the district bench he continued to serve uninterruptedly without opposition until January 1, 1903. He then announced his unwillingness to serve longer because of failing health, whereupon the bar of his district, in a meeting at Davenport by resolution unanimously commended his career as having been at all times conscientious, painstaking, honest, fearless, broad-minded and impartial. Judge Brannan possessed an almost marvellous memory and the faculty of lucid expression of opinion. He never abandoned his interest in newspaper work, volunteered much editorial and news matter to the local press, and contributed a series of articles to Chicago papers upon his memory of events at Washington in the time of Andrew Jackson, of which as a lad, he was a witness.

---

MARTIN NELSON JOHNSON was born in Racine county, Wis., March 3, 1850; he died at Fargo, N. D., October 21, 1909. When yet in his infancy, he was taken by his father to the family's new home in Winneshiek county, Iowa. In due time young Johnson entered the State University, graduating in 1873. He was for a short time after his graduation instructor in the California Military Academy at Oakland. Returning to Iowa he was admitted to the bar in 1876. He had just been chosen a member of the House of Representatives from his home county. In that body he was made chairman of the committee on the state library. In 1877 he was elected a member of the state Senate, being in that body when the prohibitory amendment to the constitution was adopted for submission to the next General Assembly, and supported that measure. In 1880 he was chairman of the same committee in the Senate. While a senator he secured the adoption of statutory provision under which persons applying for opportunity to teach special subjects are allowed to take examination for such specialty without being required to take a general examination. In 1876 Mr. Johnson was an elector for president and vice-president, casting his vote for Hayes and Wheeler. In 1884 he removed to the territory of Dakota, and there entered the land which was his home to the last. He was

Copyright of *Annals of Iowa* is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.