

ANNALS IOWA

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

STATEHOOD FINALLY ATTAINED

Complete attainment of the hopes and desires of those in Iowa who had sought and planned the admission of the state into the Union was realized through the unfolding of events transpiring in 1846. It was to be a significant year.

With patience somewhat strained through the rebuffs and disappointments previously experienced, the advent of the year pointed toward more favorable results. The horoscope held augury of more propitious conditions for concerted action in the territory and at Washington. Throughout the entire year there occurred events of importance each justifying commemoration in Iowa's centennial observance.

It was the Eighth Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Iowa that met at Iowa City on the first Monday of December, 1845, and its members keenly felt the pressure of public demand for further action after the rejection by the voters of the constitution of 1844. President Polk had advanced James Clarke to the governorship. Having assisted in framing the rejected constitution, he regretted the failure of ratification, but still favored early state organization. Making no definite recommendations, however, he said in his message that he would co-operate in support of any measure adopted that would assist in an early admission of Iowa into the Union.

Thereupon, the legislative assembly passed a bill authorizing the election of delegates to another constitutional convention. This was approved by Governor Clarke on January 17, 1846, and provided for election by the people at the township elections on April 6 of thirty-two delegates. At this election twenty-two Democrats and ten

Whigs were elected, and pursuant to the act met at Iowa City on Monday, May 4, to form another constitution for the state of Iowa, to be submitted to the people, and if ratified then to be considered by the congress of the United States.

Sentiment had crystalized in the state more favorable to bringing the matter of permanent state organization to speedy and successful conclusion. The record of the convention is not voluminous, but evidently agreement was had to enact a formal document that would not invite the criticisms and opposition that deluged and defeated the constitution of 1844. Their work accomplished, the convention adjourned May 19, with the state boundaries as now constituted, including the 43'-30" north line. This was to be voted on August 3 by the voters of Iowa.

Augustus C. Dodge, delegate from Iowa territory, and Stephen A. Douglas, senator from Illinois, were still co-operating to complete the job of getting Iowa admitted as a state in 1846. Mr. Dodge had presented to congress the constitution of 1844, with the boundaries earlier proposed by Governor Lucas. Congress had authorized the admission of Florida and Iowa in 1845. Iowa refused to accept the state with the so-called Nicollet boundaries, or smaller state. Mr. Dodge had urged acceptance of the Nicollet boundaries, but was re-elected a delegate on the promise he would work for the Lucas boundaries. In December, 1845, Mr. Dodge had introduced a bill to admit Iowa with the Lucas boundaries.

Then on March 27, 1846, Senator Douglas introduced in the senate a bill to admit Iowa with a compromise boundary, fixing the northern line 43' 30", but not wholly definite as to the entire boundary. The bill introduced by Mr. Dodge in December, together with the Douglas substitute of March, were being considered by the Committee on Territories in an effort to effect the desired compromise which Senator Douglas was willing to adopt. Mr. Dodge had insisted on the Lucas boundaries,

even though he previously had urged Iowa to accept the Nicollet boundaries.

While the Iowa constitutional convention was in session in May, Mr. Dodge received a letter stating positively that Iowa would insist upon the Lucas boundary; and, he received a memorial from that convention instructing him to insist upon the larger state. But he also received, at a little later date, information that Iowa would accept the compromise boundary. In June the Iowa bill came up for debate in the house at Washington. Mr. Dodge read the letters he had received. On June 8 the bill for amendment of the boundaries was reported by the Committee of the Whole to the house and on June 9, passed the house. It was immediately messaged to the senate, but not passed by that body until August 1.

In the meantime spirited opposition to the new constitution had developed in its submission to Iowa voters for their approval. The Whigs were active in the opposition, and Governor Clarke, though a Democrat, joined in this opposition which the constitutional convention had hoped to avoid. The omission of many controversial matters irked him; and, especially, the prohibiting of organization of banks provoked his wrath. Also, he opposed what he termed the "experiment" of an elective judicial system; and expressed fears that the larger state would result in the removal of the state capital from Iowa City to a more central location. But on August 3, 1846, the vote was 9,492 for adoption of the constitution, and 9,036 against, giving a majority of 456 for adoption. President Polk signed the bill for amending the act of 1845 and authorizing the new boundary Aug. 4, 1846, a day after the territory had voted favorable to the new constitution. However, the president could not know then what the vote had been, as at that time communication with distant points was slow and often delayed.

In conformity with the direction of the territorial statute of January 17, 1846, Governor Clarke on Sep-

tember 9 issued a proclamation announcing the ratification and adoption of the state constitution and designated October 26, 1846, as the day for holding the first general election for state officers and members of a general assembly. At this election Ansel Briggs, the Democratic candidate, was elected governor over Thomas McKnight, a Whig, by a majority of 161 votes.

Pursuant to the provisions of the new constitution on November 5 Governor Clarke issued a proclamation fixing November 30, 1846, as the date for the first meeting of the general assembly. On December 2 Governor Clarke transmitted his last message to the legislature, and on December 3 the inauguration of Governor Ansel Briggs took place in Iowa City, weeks before the state was admitted to the Union.

On December 15 Mr. Dodge presented the new state constitution to congress, and a bill was introduced to authorize admission of Iowa with the new constitution. It was this bill that President Polk signed December 28, 1846. It required one further act, and that by the legislature of Iowa accepting all the conditions fixed by act of congress, and this was not accomplished until January 15, 1849, and approved on January 17 that year.

CENTENNIAL CHRONOLOGY

The earlier dates in 1846 have equal importance with that of the president signing the final act of admission to statehood. The anniversary dates for the Iowa centennial year of statehood might well be designated as follows:

January 17—First step toward a new constitution.

April 6—Election delegates for second constitutional convention.

May 19—Iowa constitution day, adoption of constitution of 1846.

June 9—In congress the house passes the bill for new Iowa boundaries.

August 1—The bill also passed in the U. S. senate.

August 3—Iowa voters approve new constitution.

August 4—President Polk signs bill approving the present Iowa boundaries.

September 9—Governor Clarke proclaims statehood attained for Iowa.

October 26—First election for Iowa state offices.

December 3—Inauguration of a state government.

December 28—Final act of admission of Iowa as a state, by President Polk's approval.

NAMING OF WISCONSIN AND IOWA

Only a few months prior to his death in Dubuque on July 22, 1896, former United States Senator George W. Jones dictated what may have been one of his last letters. It was addressed to his old personal friend, Curator Charles Aldrich of the Iowa Historical Department, and was in response to an inquiry from Mr. Aldrich regarding the naming of the Wisconsin and Iowa territories.

Senator Jones was born at Vincennes, Indiana, April 12, 1804. He was a drummer boy in the war of 1812, and won distinction in the Black Hawk war in Illinois and Wisconsin. He was the last delegate in congress from Michigan territory, the first delegate from Wisconsin territory and one of the first United States Senators from the state of Iowa in 1848, to which position he was re-elected.

No other man from Iowa enjoyed a more distinguished and colorful public career. At the time of his death his friend, Major C. D. Ham, wrote and there was published in the *Dubuque Herald* a detailed account of his useful public service, which was reprinted in THE ANNALS, Vol. II, No. 7, pp. 563-5.

Following is the letter of Senator Jones to Mr. Aldrich, which has never heretofore been published:

Dubuque, Iowa, April 8th, 1896.

Hon. Cha's Aldrich,
Des Moines, Iowa.

My dear Friend:

Your kind note of the 7th ins't has just been received & I immediately reply to it, to say that I gave the name to the Terri-

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