

"PRIVATE ARCHIVES" OF GOVERNOR KIRKWOOD.

BY EDGAR R. HARLAN.

That the one term service as governor by Ralph P. Lowe and his nomination and election to the Supreme bench, and the nomination and election of Samuel J. Kirkwood for his first term instead of Governor Lowe being given a second term, was brought about through fine harmonizing influences is nicely indicated in the two letters to Governor Kirkwood that follow:

Des Moines, Iowa, 17th May, 1859.

Hon. S. J. Kirkwood,
Iowa City.

Dear Sir:

I am in receipt of a letter from Governor Lowe, just such as a Republican and a gentleman should write. It satisfied me that by no act of his will the safety or good feeling of the Republican nomination be endangered. In reply, after speaking of the prospects of the canvass before the Convention, I have referred to your position in terms which I deem proper to communicate to you; namely:

"I saw Mr. Kirkwood at Iowa City. I feel convinced that nothing has been done by him of a nature calculated to be disagreeable to you or objectionable in itself. His friends drew him out as a candidate before he knew from either yourself or your friends of your intention to offer for renomination. So he says, and so circumstances indicate. I believe entire good feeling will prevail among the friends of both."

You will agree with me in the importance of preserving this preliminary canvass from bitterness, and from partial combinations and schemes. The impression prevails somewhat that your friends and those of Edwards are combining. Should this extend itself, the friends of Hamilton in the north east would take umbrage. Both Edwards¹ and Hamilton² are fully worthy of the

¹John Edwards was born in Jefferson County, Kentucky, October 24, 1815. He was educated in the schools of Louisville. He removed to Indiana and in 1848 was elected to the legislature, serving one term. In 1852 he was elected state senator by the Whig party. In 1853 he removed to Iowa, and began the practice of law at Chariton. He was a member of the Constitutional Convention of 1857, and served through the Seventh and Eighth General Assemblies. At the outbreak of the Civil War he was aide on the staff of Governor Kirkwood, and in 1862 was commissioned Colonel of the Eighteenth Iowa Infantry, serving through the war and later brevetted Brigadier General. After the war he settled at Fort Smith, Arkansas, and was appointed by President Johnson as Assessor of Internal Revenue. In 1871 he was elected to Congress by the Democratic party and served one term.

²William W. Hamilton was born in England and emigrated to America in 1845, settling in Dubuque, Iowa. He practiced law and was interested in all public affairs, including education and politics. In 1849 he was elected probate judge of Dubuque County, serving until 1852. In 1854 he was

nomination to the Lieutenantcy, and either will be heartily supported if nominated upon his own merits and position. It might be different if he were nominated by seeming contract. A complimentary paragraph to Hamilton (like that to Edwards last week) in the "Republican" of your city, would tend to dissipate this impression. Govr. Lowe's³ friends will probably not withdraw his name until they learn about the time of the assembling of the Convention that the delegates favor a new nomination. I do not see that this will do harm, but will rather swell the numbers called to the convention, and increase the interest. At that time, too, if his friends shall choose to do it, he can be named for a place on the Supreme Bench.

I remain very respectfully and truly,

JOHN A. KASSON.⁴

(Tuesday)

Davenport, April 20/59.

Dear Sir

I have for some time desired to drop you a few lines in regard to political matters, knowing how earnest and deep an interest you take for the fate of the Republ. party, which, as I faithfully believe, is destined to regenerate our country from the deep whirlpool of corruption and ruin in which at present it (is) sunk

elected to the state senate and served through the Fifth, Fifth Extra, and Sixth General Assemblies.

³Ralph P. Lowe was born in Warren County, Ohio, November 27, 1805. He died at Washington, D. C., December 22, 1883. He graduated from Miami University and began the study of law. In 1840 he removed to Bloomington (now Muscatine), Iowa, where he worked on a farm and began the practice of law, taking an active part in political affairs. In 1844 he was elected a member of the First Constitutional Convention. He served as judge of the District Court from 1852 to 1857, when he was nominated for Governor and therefore resigned his position as judge. He was the first Governor under the constitution of 1857 and served one term. He was elected judge of the Supreme Court and served from 1860 to 1867. He removed to Washington, D. C., in 1874 and resumed the practice of law.

⁴John A. Kasson was born at Charlotte, Vermont, January 11, 1822. He died in Washington, D. C., May 19, 1910. He graduated from the University of Vermont in 1842; was admitted to the bar in Massachusetts in 1845; removed to St. Louis and, in 1857, to Des Moines. He was Chairman of the Republican State Central Committee from 1853 to 1860, a delegate to the National Republican Convention which first nominated Lincoln for President, First Assistant Postmaster General from 1861 to 1862, United States Commissioner to the International Postal Congress in Paris in 1863 and in 1867, represented the Fifth District of Iowa in Congress from 1863 to 1867 and the Seventh District from 1873 to 1877 and was a member of the Iowa House of Representatives from 1868 to 1872. He declined a mission to Spain, but served as United States Minister to Austria from 1877 to 1881. Being again elected to Congress, he served from 1881 to 1884, when he was appointed Minister to Germany. He was special commissioner and special envoy to several important conferences between the United States and other countries; a member of the National Geographical Society, American Association for the Advancement of Science and the Washington Academy of Sciences and President of the Columbia Historical Society. He was the author of "The Evolution of the United States Constitution" and "History of the Monroe Doctrine."

through the unconsciousness and want of true patriotism of its managers. If I should be disappointed in this my faith in the party which I and so many thousand freedom loving Germans have joined with so much enthusiasm, if the Republ. party ever should loose sight of its great destiny, to restore within the hearts of the people the true sense for justice and liberty the original spirit of the Declaration of Independence, that is; equal rights to all men and a hearty welcome to the oppressed of all nations, who might seek a home among free men; I say, if I should be disappointed in this, I do not in fact know whence I should take the encouragement to enter into a new struggle and keep myself above indifference. If the Republ. party should ever attempt to absorb elements which would be a blight to its pure fame, its holyness would at once be destroyed and the confidence of the people in it could never be restored. I have not such dark fears! I faithfully believe that there are unnumbered thousands of freedom loving men in our party, whose heads and hearts are on the plain ground in regard to the true meaning of republican liberty and their task will it be to hold high our glorious banner, unspotted and undisgraced, like Caesar's wife above suspicion.

Though with great affliction must I say that at this moment a great number of my countrymen feel their confidence in the party weakened and their suspicion that the Republ. party, if everywhere successful might use its power to oppress foreign born citizens, is again awakened. The reason is the recent action of the Republ. party in the State of Massachusetts. You will admit, my dear sir, that this suspicion is to a certain extent justified. We expected to be garded against all such attempts by the National Republ. platform which says in plain words that no discrimination between citizens on account of nationality shall be made and that all legislation to the contrary shall be rebuked. You may reply, as generally is done, how the Republ. party in Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois, etc., can be made responsible for the conduct of the party in Massachusetts, but I beg you, sir, to take into consideration, of what use or weight is a national party platform, if the party in the several states do not feel themselves bound by it, but think themselves justified to violate the same whenever they choose? I have sayd before that my own confidence in our party in this respect, especially in the northwestern states, stands firm, but it is deeply to be regretted that the question is earnestly agitated in the entire Republ. German press in the Union, whether it might be safe policy for us to help the Republ. party to success and to the possession of the power to trample us down. The Muscatine German paper, heretofore Republican has already, certainly premature, left the party. It is indeed as much opposed to Democracy as it ever before was, though what does that help us.

This paper has a large circulation in your city and to its present bitterness towards the Republ. party you may ascribe in a great extent the results of your late city election. The great majority of the Germans of course stand yet firm to the party for they cannot so easily be turned but the union is too young and needs to be nursed. The dissatisfaction is gradually dying away and will do so completely if the Republ. State Convention of the several states will adopt resolutions in regard to the matter as, I hope, will be done. The Germans are anxious to bury the tomahawk, which you may judge from the fact, that more than eight hundred of them in Scott County voted for W. Vandever,⁵ notwithstanding it was generally known and strongly used by the other side to irritate their prejudice, that he formally did belong to the Know nothing party.

Though speaking about politics I intended to confine myself mainly to our own State and our next State Convention. Since it was pretty generally understood that Governor Lowe would properly not be renominated I fixed my mind upon you as for his successor and I have since then conversed and corresponded with a great many about the subject. Though to my regret it was most generally expressed that you would not accept the nomination. For this reason I intended once to write to you, but however thinking that my humble wishes could not influence your well considered actions I abandoned it. The more gratified do I feel in learning from Mr. H. Price⁶ that you are willing to consent to be our candidate for governor and I would not be surprised if you should be nominated at the very first ballot. There is not another man in the State, whom I could with so much pleasure recommend to my German fellow citizens under the present circumstances than you, for your free mindedness, is undisputed. You have never sympathized with any kind of proscription and in regard

⁵William Vandever was born at Baltimore, Maryland, March 31, 1817. He died at Buena Ventura, Cal., July 23, 1893. He removed to Rock Island, Illinois, and surveyed large tracts of the public lands in Illinois, Wisconsin and Iowa. He became editor of the *Rock Island Advertiser* in 1846 and conducted that journal, and advocated the building of a railroad from Chicago to the Mississippi River, which, when accomplished, was the first division of the Rock Island Railway. He began the practice of law and in 1855 became clerk of the Supreme Court of Iowa. He was elected to represent the Second Iowa District in Congress and served from 1859 to 1863. He was appointed Colonel of the Ninth Iowa Infantry, participating in the battle of Pea Ridge, the Vicksburg campaign, Lookout Mountain and the march to the sea with Sherman. For gallant service he was promoted to the rank of brevet Major General. He afterward removed to California and served in Congress from that state.

⁶Hiram Price was born in Washington county, Pa., January 10, 1814. He died at Washington, D. C., May 30, 1901. In 1844 he removed to Davenport, Iowa, and opened a store. He served as treasurer and recorder of Scott county, took active part in organizing the State Bank of Iowa under the law of 1858, and served as president of this institution from 1860 to 1865. He represented the Second Iowa District in Congress from 1863 to 1869 and from 1877 to 1881; was Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1881 to 1885 when he removed his residence to Washington, D. C., where he remained until his death.

to the temperance question you are at least considered not to be in any way fanatic. Our whole delegation, as far as I am able to learn, will go for you with real enthusiasm.

There will be no objection from here to P. Clarke's⁷ nomination for supreme judge though there seems to be a general feeling in favor of Chief Justice Wright's⁸ renomination. For Lieutenant Governor I should like to see Judge Hamilton nominated, who made a most splendid presiding officer in the Senate two years ago, though there is a strange objection against him which I am unable to understand. Doubts as to his political reliability and accusations of various kinds are expressed but to my great delight did I not find anybody who was able to prove anything against him. I must say that I do not believe a single word of it. Our politicians here are unwilling to support him on account of his being from Dubuque county, for she, as they say, had her full share. This is certainly, in my opinion, a very unfounded objection. Local claims for office cannot be consistent with true republicanism and I sincerely hope that such kind of objections as were so earnestly made against Grimes⁹ election for United States Senator, will never be sustained by the people, and the sooner our party will do away with such old fogysm the better will it be for the country and the people. I for one am willing to select all our officers from a little borough in Buncombe¹⁰ county if accidentally

⁷William Penn Clarke was born in Baltimore, Maryland, October 1, 1817. He died at Washington, D. C., February 7, 1903. He removed to Cincinnati in 1838, and later became editor of the *Logan Gazette* in Ohio. In 1844 he located in Iowa City, Iowa, and was admitted to the bar. He was chairman of the Iowa delegation to the National Republican Convention in 1860, took active part in the anti-slavery agitation, was a member of the National Kansas Committee and the keeper of a station on the "underground railroad." He prepared the original ordinances for the government of Iowa City, was supreme court reporter for five years, member of the Constitutional Convention of 1857, paymaster in the army during the Civil war, and after the war was for some time chief clerk in the Interior Department at Washington.

⁸George Grover Wright was born in Bloomington, Indiana, March 24, 1820. He died in Des Moines, Iowa, January 11, 1896. He graduated from the Indiana State University in 1839, and read law with his brother, Governor Joseph A. Wright. He was admitted to the bar in 1840, and the same year commenced the practice in Keosauqua, Iowa. He was prosecuting attorney for Van Buren county, state senator two terms, chief justice in 1855 and on the supreme bench for fifteen years. He removed to Des Moines in 1865, became United States senator in 1870 and served six years.

⁹James W. Grimes was born in Deering, New Hampshire, October 20, 1816. He died at Burlington, Iowa, February 7, 1872. He was educated in the district school, attended Hampton Academy, spent three years at Dartmouth College, read law in Petersborough, New Hampshire, and removed to Burlington, Iowa, in 1836. He was city solicitor, justice of the peace, representative from Des Moines county to the first and sixth legislative assemblies and the fourth general assembly, Governor of Iowa 1855-1856, and United States senator from 1859 to 1869.

¹⁰The report of the conference committee was promptly agreed to except as to the name Buncombe. The managers on the part of the House said the members were opposed to the name; but after the statement that it was suggested in honor of Colonel Buncombe, a soldier of the Revolutionary war, and that North Carolina had named one county Buncombe, the only one in the United States; that the county was the most elevated one in that state; that it would be appropriate to name the northern part of Iowa Buncombe, being the most elevated part of Iowa, the managers yielded, the report was agreed to, written out and submitted to the different houses and adopted January 6, 1851. * * * *

Buncombe retained its name until after the battle of Wilson's Creek in Missouri. In this battle * * * * * Brig. Gen. Nathaniel Lyon was in command and was killed. * * * * * The General Assembly, wishing to honor General Lyon, looked over the counties for the purpose of

the best men could be found collected there. From the strong claim, as our men say, which Scott County as the Republ. banner county represents, there seems to be an inclination to run me for Lieutenant Governor and also are all the Germans in the State coxing me to be a candidate as a demonstratum ad hominem that the Republ. party has nothing to do with Know nothingism, but you know best what good reasons I have to keep my hands of. I thank God that he has give me modesty enough not to seek a position which I believe myself not able to sustain to my own satisfaction, for my broken English and little experience are not proper qualifications for an office of that nature. This is the main reason why I urge the nomination of Hamilton for he, being an adopted citizen, would though not quite as much as myself, to a certain degree satisfy the German Republicans and would consequently be a strong candidate.

I beg, my dear sir, your kind forbearance for this unseemly long letter and with my imperfect style and mode of writing, as I could not help it to express to you my gratification in regard to your willingness to accept the nomination for Governor.

I am very respectfully your friend,

N. J. RUSCH.¹¹

seeing what one might be changed, and still having some prejudice against the name of Buncombe, decided that Lyon should take the place of that name in the list of counties.—ANNALS, v. II, No. 2-3, p. 198, 201.

¹¹Nicholas J. Rusch was born in Holstein, Germany, in 1822. He received a good education and taught school for several years. He emigrated to America and located on a farm near Davenport, Iowa, in 1847. He soon acquired a knowledge of the language, laws and institutions of this country and became an influential leader among the German Americans. He was a Republican in politics, was nominated by his party for state senator in 1857 and elected. He served as Lieutenant Governor of Iowa from 1860 to 1862. He also served as Commissioner of Immigration from 1860 to 1862 with great efficiency. In 1862 he was appointed to a position in the Commissary Department with the rank of Captain. He died in the service at Vicksburg in 1864.

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