

# THE POLITICAL FIRECRACKER: SAMUEL J. KIRKWOOD

by Herbert V. Hake

On January 13, 1876, Samuel J. Kirkwood was inaugurated for a third term as Governor of Iowa. The domed Statehouse on Grand Avenue was still under construction, and the temporary brick capitol was too small for gala events such as inaugurations. The ceremony was therefore held in the Opera House. On January 14, 1876, the *Des Moines Leader* carried the following story:

The inauguration of Governor Kirkwood was in progress at the Opera House. The last sweet strains of 'Listen to the Mocking Bird' had died away when Governor Kirkwood commenced his address. Just at this moment, a fiery ball came whirling down through the air, and, striking upon the top of one of the hacks between the Opera House and the Savery, bounded off into the street, where it lay for several moments, crackling, hissing and burning its way into the frozen ground. The terrified hackmen and bystanders looked on in astonishment at the strange sight, and wondered whether it were a slice of the Day of Judg-

ment or the fire of Prometheus, while the frightened horses careened and jumped about and champed their bits in terror. . . . Aside from a dent in the top, the carriage sustained no damage. Finally, the spluttering ceased, the mass cooled, and was speedily broken up and carried away by the curious.

The meteorite was a fitting salute to the first man in the history of the state who had been elected to a third term as Governor, who would soon be elected to a full term in the United States Senate, and who was destined, in five years, to be Secretary of the Interior in the Cabinet of President James A. Garfield. He didn't look like a political firecracker. Indeed, the opposition press neglected no opportunity to picture him as an untidy clodhopper. John Irish, a staunch Democrat, filed a story about a campaign speech by John A. Kasson at which the Governor introduced the speaker. He wrote: "Kirkwood, with the omnipresent 'chaw' in his cheek, and distilled nicotine dripping on his variegated shirt front, presented Kasson to the audience." But the facts could not be distorted. His explosive career in politics made him unique in the annals of Iowa history.

On June 9, 1887, Kirkwood wrote a summary of his early years in a letter to J. C. Cabell. The data was submitted for the *World's Fair Biographical Dictionary*. Of his pre-Iowa life, he wrote:

1. My full name is Samuel Jordan Kirkwood.
2. My father's name was Jabez Kirkwood.
3. My mother's name was Mary Alexander. When she and my father were married,



she was a widow. The name of her first husband was Wallace.

4. I was born on a farm in Hartford County, Maryland, on December 20, 1813.
5. I am not a 'graduate.' What education I had was at an academy kept in Washington City by John McLeod. My attendance ended when I was about fourteen years of age.
6. I went to Ohio in 1835—read law there and was admitted to the bar in 1843. Was Prosecuting Attorney of Richland County, Ohio, for four years, 1845 to 1849.

7. Was a member of the Convention 1850-1 that formed the present Constitution of the State of Ohio.

8. Removed to Iowa in 1855 and engaged in milling and farming.

Dan Elbert Clark, who wrote the story of Kirkwood for the Iowa Biographical Series, told how the erstwhile Ohio attorney now "became a full fledged Iowa miller and farmer, wearing the dusty coat of one and the soil-stained boots of the other." Kirkwood purchased a part inter-



The scene of Kirkwood's gala and the crash of the fireball, Fourth Street in Des Moines, shown here in 1875 one year before Kirkwood's third inaugural. The Opera House is on the right, the Savery on the left.



est in a flour and grist mill at Coralville on the Iowa River and in a farm of about 1200 acres adjoining the mill site. He had married an Ohio girl, Jane Clark, in 1843, and it was because of enthusiastic letters from Ezekiel Clark, Jane's oldest brother who was operating a mill and farm near Iowa City, that the Kirkwoods decided to move to Iowa and to form the partnership of Clark and Kirkwood.

Samuel Kirkwood had been a Democrat in his young manhood, but, as Leland L. Sage has observed in his book, *A History of Iowa*, "he was shocked and disillusioned by what he saw as a youth of the slave trade in Washington, D.C., and was completely won over to anti-slavery views during his residence in Ohio before coming to Iowa in 1855, so could not in good conscience remain a Democrat." He was a delegate from Johnson County to the Convention called in Iowa City on February 22, 1856, for the purpose of organizing the Republican Party in Iowa. His speech in the Stone Capitol was so decisive an influence upon the other delegates to the Convention that he was no longer permitted to remain in quiet seclusion at his mill on the Iowa River.

In later years, the *Iowa City Daily Republican* recalled that,

a delegation of prominent citizens of Iowa City drove up the river a couple of miles and, halting before an old grist mill, called out a rugged, flour-covered man named Samuel J. Kirkwood and informed him that the people of Johnson County had nominated him for the State Senate. Taking a seat on a convenient log, the miller promptly explained why he could not be a candidate, winding up with a declaration that the music of the dam and the hum of his machinery were more agreeable to him

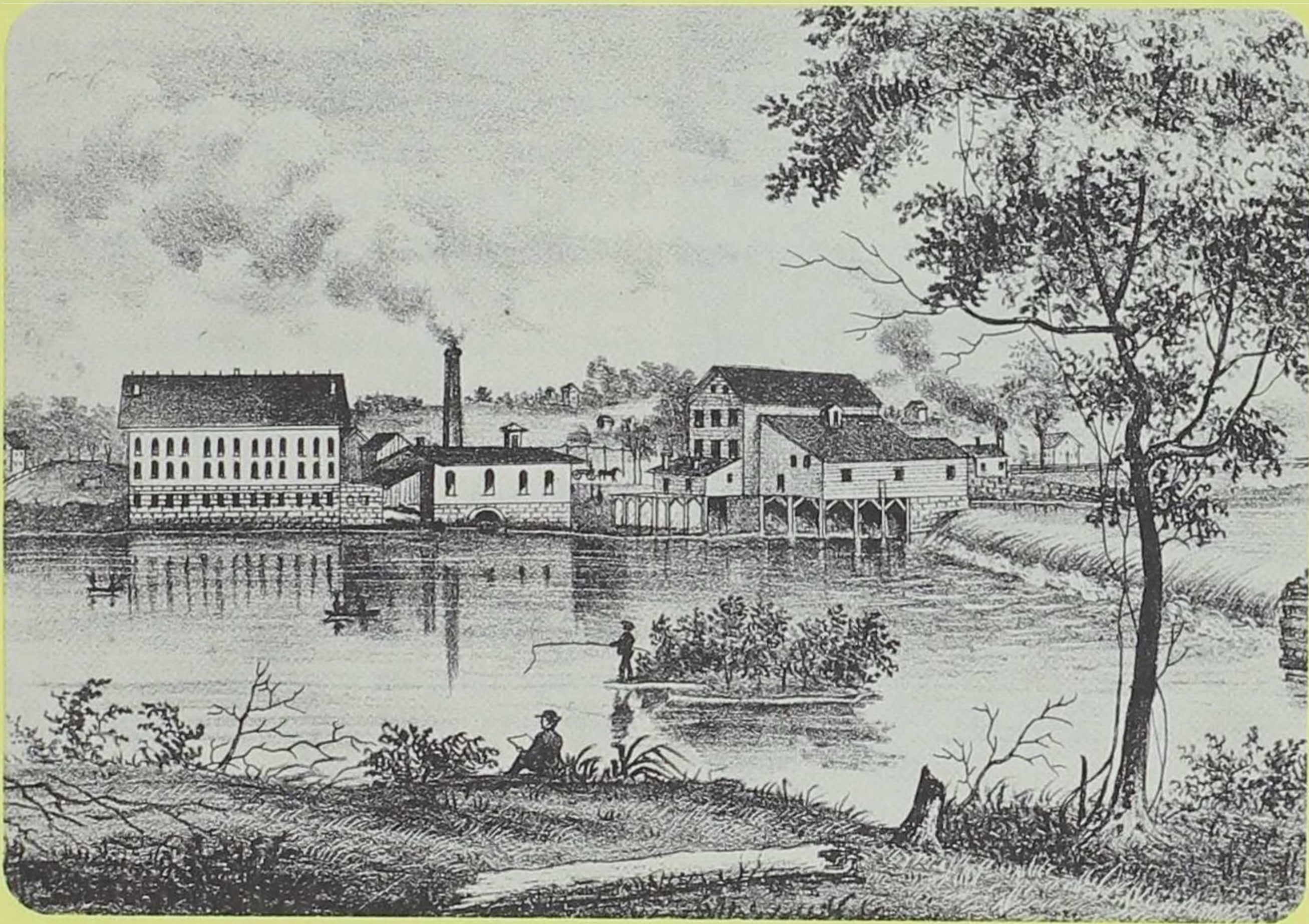
than the contentions of politics. "But you MUST run," said the emphatic Bob Finkbine. A few more enthusiastic expressions, followed by the widespread favor with which the nomination was received throughout the county settled the question, and Mr. Kirkwood entered the legislature and public life in Iowa.

The year was 1856. The fuse of a political firecracker had been lighted.

The casual dress of the State Senator, his lack of ostentation and his outspoken opposition to slavery made "Sam" Kirkwood, as he was known by then, a successful candidate when he sought the Republican nomination for Governor in 1859. His opponent on the Democratic side was Augustus C. Dodge. *The Bloomfield Clarion* unwittingly gave Kirkwood a campaign asset by referring to the Republican candidates for state office as the "Plough-handle Ticket." The two candidates for Governor were scheduled for a joint appearance in the little city of Washington, Iowa. Dodge's supporters groomed four white horses to pull the finest carriage in town for a triumphal entrance by their candidate. The Republicans countered this elegance by bringing Kirkwood to the speakers' stand in a lumber wagon drawn by a yoke of oxen. The inference was unmistakable. At the end of the campaign, on October 11, 1859, Samuel Jordan Kirkwood was elected Governor of Iowa by a majority of 3,170 votes over Augustus Caesar Dodge.

In 1860, Governor Kirkwood gave Abraham Lincoln his wholehearted support at the Republican National Convention in Chicago even though he realized that the nomination of Lincoln for President might aggravate the breach between the North and South. After Lincoln was elected,





*Kirkwood's Mill in Coralville, on the right. The other buildings were a paper mill (center) and a woolen mill (left).*

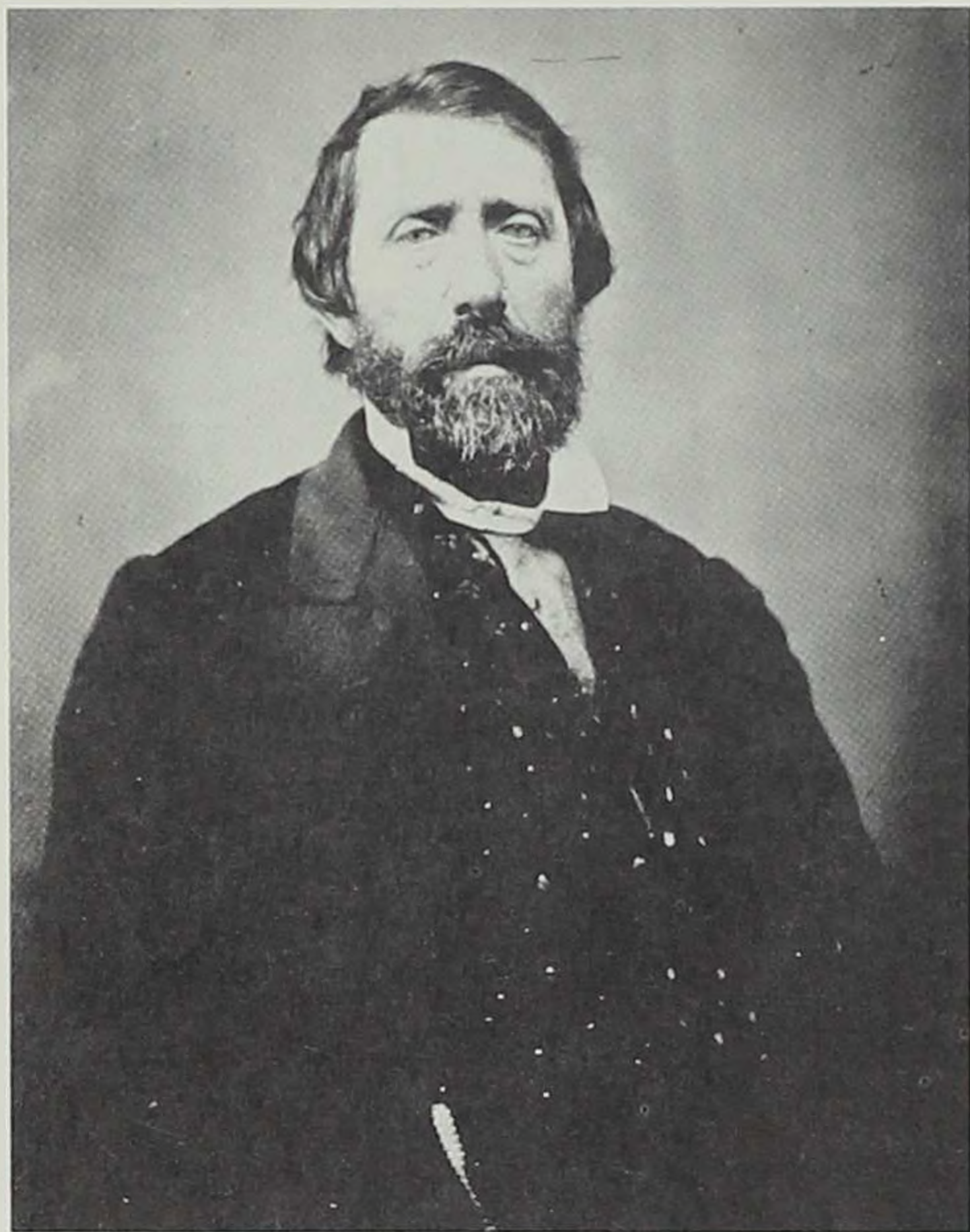
Kirkwood made a trip to Springfield, Illinois, to call upon the President-elect before his departure for Washington, D.C. What the two men said to each other was not recorded verbatim, but it is known that the Governor gave Lincoln his unqualified pledge of allegiance. Later, he journeyed to the nation's capital to witness the inauguration of his friend from Illinois.

When the firing on Fort Sumter began the Civil War on April 12, 1861, Kirkwood received a request from the President for one regiment of men. The telegraph line from the east did not extend beyond Davenport at that time, and William Vandiver, then a member of Congress, took the first train to Iowa City and delivered the telegram to Kirkwood in person. He found

the Governor in boots and overalls working in his garden. When he read the message, Kirkwood exclaimed: "Why, the President wants a whole regiment of men! Do you suppose, Mr. Vandiver, I can raise that many?" His misgivings were soon set to rest. In less than 24 hours, the services of 15 or 20 companies had been offered to Kirkwood. The Governor found himself embarrassed because there were more volunteers than the War Department could outfit with arms and clothing.

The obligations of the Iowa "War Governor" were not limited to enlisting regiments for service on distant battlefields. There were also hazards at home which had to be faced. In the early summer of 1861, the First Regiment of Iowa Infantry was





*Samuel J. Kirkwood*

sent down the Mississippi River to St. Louis—ultimately to fight at Wilson's Creek, and the Second Iowa Regiment was being mobilized in Keokuk. Kirkwood had been urging the War Department in Washington to send arms for the military equipment of these volunteers. On August 1, 1861, he finally got some action. Thirty-five tons of supplies, including rifles and ammunition, arrived in Keokuk. News of this shipment reached the ears of Missouri guerillas led by a Confederate officer named Martin Green.

Green decided to attack the town of Athens, on the northern boundary of Missouri, where Colonel David Moore had set up a recruiting base for the Union. Directly opposite Athens, on the Iowa side of the Des Moines River, was the railroad town of Croton. If the attack on Moore succeeded, the guerillas would wade across

the shallow river and commandeer a train which would take them to Keokuk, where they would confiscate the entire shipment of arms. It didn't work out that way.

Rumors of the rebel plan spread quickly, and a company of volunteers called the Keokuk Rifles reinforced Colonel Moore's force in Athens. The attack by the guerillas on August 5 failed. The rebel cannons were aimed too high, and several cannonballs arched over the river and fell harmlessly on Iowa soil. But the guerillas did not follow them. They retreated in such disorder that the cannons were left where they had been fired. As a result of the guerilla activity, Governor Kirkwood ordered Colonel Grenville M. Dodge to organize a regiment of infantry to protect the southern counties in Iowa. But there were no more attempted invasions. Evidently, the guerillas had learned their lesson.

In 1862, there was a threat to Iowa from the north. The Sioux Indians were on the warpath in southern Minnesota. Several whites were killed in the farming country around New Ulm. Settlers in northwest Iowa abandoned their homes and fled to the more thickly populated areas of the state. It was only five years after the Spirit Lake Massacre, and there were fearful expectations of renewed danger from the Sioux. Governor Kirkwood issued orders for the organization of five companies of state troops to protect the frontier. They were called the Northern Iowa Border Brigade.

The Battle of Athens in Missouri and the Sioux raids in Minnesota had been threats to Iowa borders. There were also dangers within the state. One of these was disloyalty to the Union. In various parts of



Iowa, Confederate sympathizers pondered ways to secretly help the South. An outspoken leader of a group in Keokuk County was a Baptist preacher named Cyfert Talley, who had come to Iowa from Tennessee. The Union victories at Vicksburg and Gettysburg in July of 1863 had prompted the so-called "Copperheads" to become increasingly active in gathering arms and ammunition for shipment to the Confederacy. On August 1, 1863, Talley and some of his followers held a meeting in a grove near South English. After the meeting, they drove their wagons through town on their way back to their homes in the Skunk River valley. Loyal supporters of the Union taunted the "Copperheads," and, in the heat of argument, a shot was fired. Shooting by both sides followed, and, either by accident or design, Cyfert Talley was shot through the head. He died instantly. This had a sobering

effect upon everyone, but the followers of Talley vowed they would return to South English for vengeance.

News of Talley's death spread through "Copperhead" country, and more than a thousand Talley sympathizers from Keokuk, Wapello, Mahaska, and Poweshiek Counties organized the "Skunk River Army." The people of South English appealed to Governor Kirkwood for help, and the militia was ordered into Keokuk County. The Governor went in person to Sigourney, the county seat, and made a speech from the courthouse steps. The speech was impromptu, but it was forceful and direct. Kirkwood left no doubt that he would use the full powers of his office to stop the rebellion. By morning, the "Copperhead" camp was deserted.

Years later, Kirkwood received a letter from N. P. Chipman, who had been a member of the staff of General Curtis. Chipman wrote:

There are many incidents & events in the history of Iowa to be told hereafter by the Biographer and historian of less importance than that little campaign. For your promptness & vigor in quenching that spark, the people of Iowa should be thankful. There was a good deal more danger in that rebel camp of a thousand men than was generally thought.

The year 1863 marked the close of Kirkwood's second term as Governor. No one before him had ever served two consecutive terms as chief executive of Iowa, and the anti-third-term position taken by George Washington as President was thought to be mandatory for a Governor as well. Kirkwood still had political aspirations, but these did not include a third term as Governor. Accordingly, William M. Stone was chosen as the Repub-

#### Note on Sources

This article is based upon Henry W. Lathrop's *Life and Times of Samuel J. Kirkwood* (Iowa City, 1893), which was personally approved by Kirkwood before publication; an autobiographical letter written by Kirkwood to J. C. Cabell on June 9, 1887, preserved in the Manuscript Collection of the State Historical Society in Iowa City; a letter written by N. P. Chipman to Kirkwood on May 18, 1865; autobiographical material which Kirkwood included in his 1883 *Report on a Completed Section of Oregon and California Railroad*, preserved in manuscript by the State Historical Society of Iowa; and the book on *Samuel Jordan Kirkwood* written by Dan Elbert Clark for the Iowa Biographical Series (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1917).

The references to the Northern Iowa Border Brigade are in Jacob Van der Zee's "Forts in the Iowa Country," *The Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, 12 (1914), 199. The nomination of Kirkwood for a third term as Governor was described by Jacob A. Swisher in "A Convention Stamped," *The Palimpsest*, 9, 10 (October 1928), 349-56, and *The Iowa City Republican* for July 7, 1875. The disenchantment of Kirkwood with the Democrats was noted by Leland L. Sage in *A History of Iowa* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1974), 123. As indicated in the text, the author has also quoted from newspapers published during Kirkwood's public career.



lican candidate, and the Democrats picked James M. Tuttle as their standard-bearer. It was significant that both candidates had been soldiers and therefore had the glamor of war heroes.

Since he was not running for anything, Kirkwood was in a position to speak only as a vigorous incumbent. In Dubuque, where disloyal sentiments had often been expressed, the Governor gave notice that he would be no "lame duck" for the remainder of his term in office. He had heard rumors that a mob might be raised in Dubuque if the draft were instituted. "I tell you," he said, "I will see to it that any mob that is started shall be put down." Then he told his audience how the uprising in Keokuk County had been suppressed. "It commenced on Saturday," he said. "I received word of the position of affairs on Tuesday, and by Wednesday night I had five companies and one piece of artillery on the ground, and by Thursday night five more companies and another piece of artillery; and there was not a blank cartridge there. And I tell you if it becomes necessary for me to come here to Dubuque on the same errand, I shall not bring a blank cartridge here." It was not necessary for him to come to Dubuque on the same errand.

Endorsement of the Kirkwood ultimatum was instantaneous. "I cannot permit a day to elapse," wrote William Duane Wilson, "without telling you the intense satisfaction I had in reading your 100-pounder speech in Dubuque. Its telling effect upon the Copperheads in the State will be equal to a standing army of 5000 men, well armed."

President Lincoln had been pondering ways to reward the valiant Governor of

Iowa for his two terms of loyal service. In his autobiographical letter to J. C. Cabell, Kirkwood noted the nature of this reward: "Was appointed by Pres. Lincoln & confirmed by the Senate as Minister to Denmark, session of 1863-64, but declined the appointment as I thought I could do better service as Gov. of Iowa. Mr. Lincoln very graciously held my declination open until the expiration of my term as Governor in January 1864 & then I made my declination final." Kirkwood had no interest in a job on foreign soil. He had his eye on the United States Senate. The political firecracker still had some charges of powder which had not yet exploded.

Until the Seventeenth Amendment to the Constitution was ratified in 1913, United States Senators were not elected by direct vote of the people as they are now. They were chosen by the state legislatures. Kirkwood had enough influence with the Iowa legislature to be reasonably certain that he could give his friend, James W. Grimes, some anxious moments if he decided to be a candidate for Grimes's seat in the Senate. However, Kirkwood regarded Grimes as a valuable public servant, as well as a close friend, and he asked that no efforts be made to jeopardize the reelection of the incumbent.

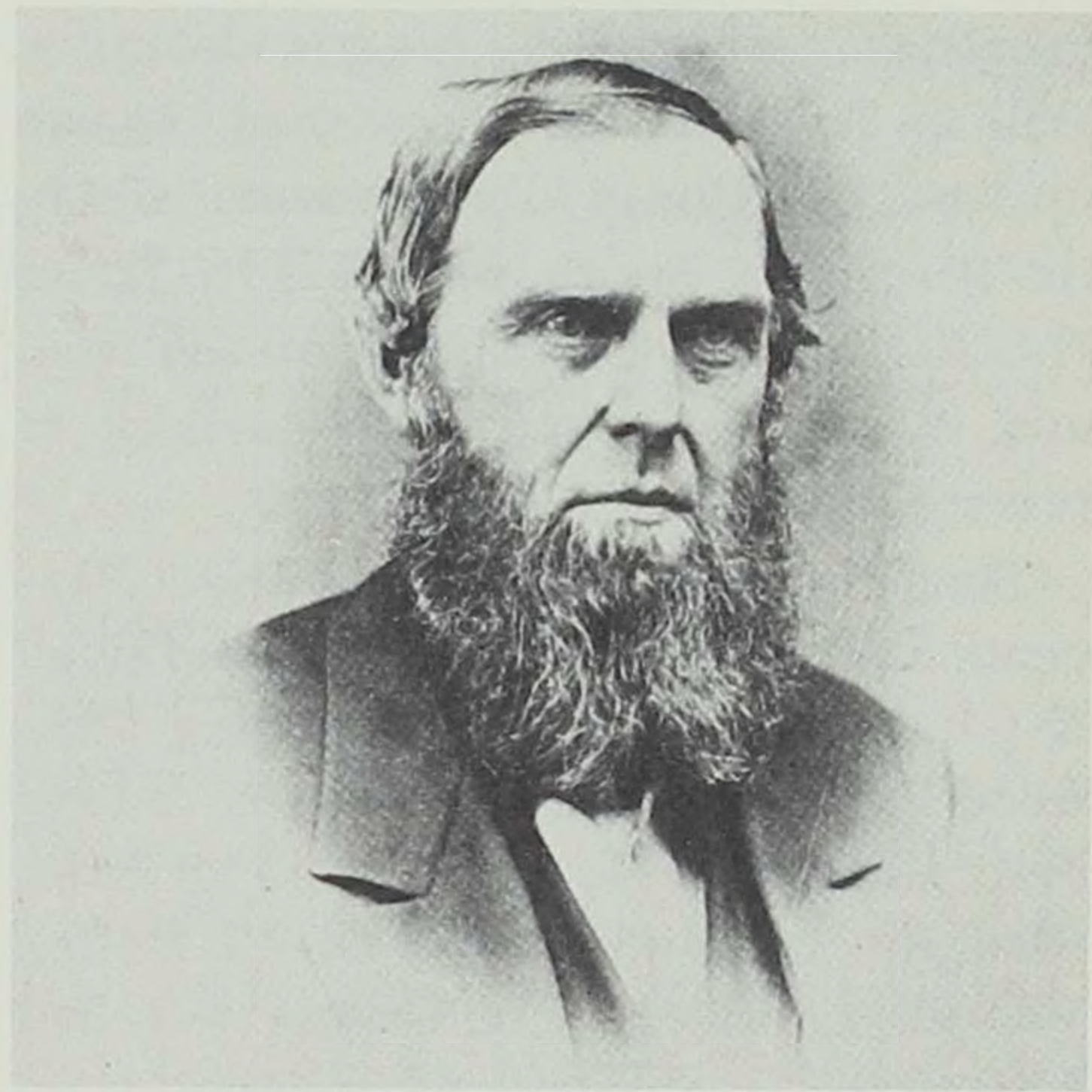
In 1865, after President Lincoln was elected to a second term and had been inaugurated for a second time, he appointed James Harlan as Secretary of the Interior. Lincoln's son, Robert Todd Lincoln, had become engaged to Senator Harlan's daughter, Mary, and the Senator was suddenly admitted to the Inner Circle. In order to accept the Cabinet post, Harlan had to give up his seat in the Senate, and a successor needed to be chosen. The pros-



pect of a senatorship was just as attractive to Kirkwood in 1865 as it had been in 1863, when he refused to run against Grimes. Kirkwood was the obvious choice, but for some obscure and, perhaps, politically motivated reason, Governor Stone did not appoint Kirkwood to fill the vacancy. He preferred to wait until the legislature convened in January of 1866.

In the meantime, President Lincoln had been assassinated, and Harlan, after brief and reluctant service in the Cabinet of President Andrew Johnson, decided to go back to the Senate, both for the remainder of his unexpired term and for the new term beginning in 1867. When the members of the General Assembly converged upon Des Moines in 1866, the Republican caucus did its preliminary work in the Savery Hotel. The Republicans were in overwhelming control of the Assembly, and their decision on candidates was tantamount to election. Harlan pulled enough patronage ropes and claimed enough Methodist support to give him an edge over Kirkwood. When the General Assembly met in joint convention, the "War Governor" was elected to the short term ending on March 3, 1867, but Harlan had collected enough political debts to win election for the full six-year term beginning on March 4, 1867.

On January 20, 1866, Kirkwood's credentials were received and filed in the Senate, and on January 24, he was formally presented to the members of the upper house by his colleague, James W. Grimes. As a Senator with a term of only a little more than a year to serve, Kirkwood did not play an especially significant role, but he was by no means a silent partner to Grimes, and he raised the eyebrows of the



*James Harlan (courtesy Division of Historical Museum and Archives)*

Establishment by crossing swords with Charles Sumner, the perennial Senator from Massachusetts. However, no one took him very seriously, because it was generally known that the familiar presence of James Harlan would again grace the Senate in 1867. When the 39th Congress adjourned on March 3, 1867, Kirkwood returned to Iowa City, where he remained in private life for the next eight years.

During this period of watchful waiting, Kirkwood resumed the practice of law, attended a convention held in St. Louis for the purpose of considering the relocation of the national capital at some point in the Mississippi Valley, was briefly involved as President of an ill-fated venture known as the Iowa and Southwestern Railroad Company, became a member of the Board of Trustees of the Iowa State Agricultural College at Ames, and rejected an appointment as Minister to Turkey.

In 1872, his recurring wish to win election to a full term in the United States



Senate was set aside by his friendship for William Boyd Allison, who wished to move up from the House of Representatives to the seat in the Senate occupied by James Harlan. In this bitter contest, Allison won, and it was Harlan's turn to go back to private life.

Then came the Republican State Convention of 1875. There was a ground swell of party enthusiasm for nominating Kirkwood as Governor, but Kirkwood did his best to ignore it. He was primed for 1876, when the legislature would elect a United States Senator. James W. Grimes, who had helped to save President Johnson from impeachment, had resigned his seat in the Senate because of ill health. In 1870, James B. Howell of Keokuk had been elected to fill the unexpired term of Senator Grimes, and George G. Wright of Keosauqua had been elected for the regular term following the short term of Howell. Wright was not interested in running again, and both Kirkwood and Harlan saw in this development a chance to go back to Washington. Kirkwood, who had his heart set upon a full term as a Senator, did not wish to do anything which might eliminate him from the senatorial race in 1876. He therefore announced that he would positively refuse to accept the nomination for Governor, even if it were tendered to him.

But the nomination of Kirkwood was unanimous. Jacob A. Swisher wrote the story of what happened:

To Kirkwood came a telegram from John H. Gear, William Larrabee, Ed Wright, R. S. Finkbine, J. G. Foote and J. Q. Tufts: 'All candidates withdrawn in your favor. You are nominated by acclamation. You must accept. It will come out all right.' And

from Nathaniel B. Baker, Adjutant General during the Civil War, came the friendly assurance, 'It could not be helped. It was the only road out. And now, I think it does not hurt you on U.S. Senator.' R. S. Finkbine was even more certain on this point, for he was confident that Kirkwood's election as Governor would give him 'a hold on the party for the Senatorship which neither Hell nor Harlan could defeat.'

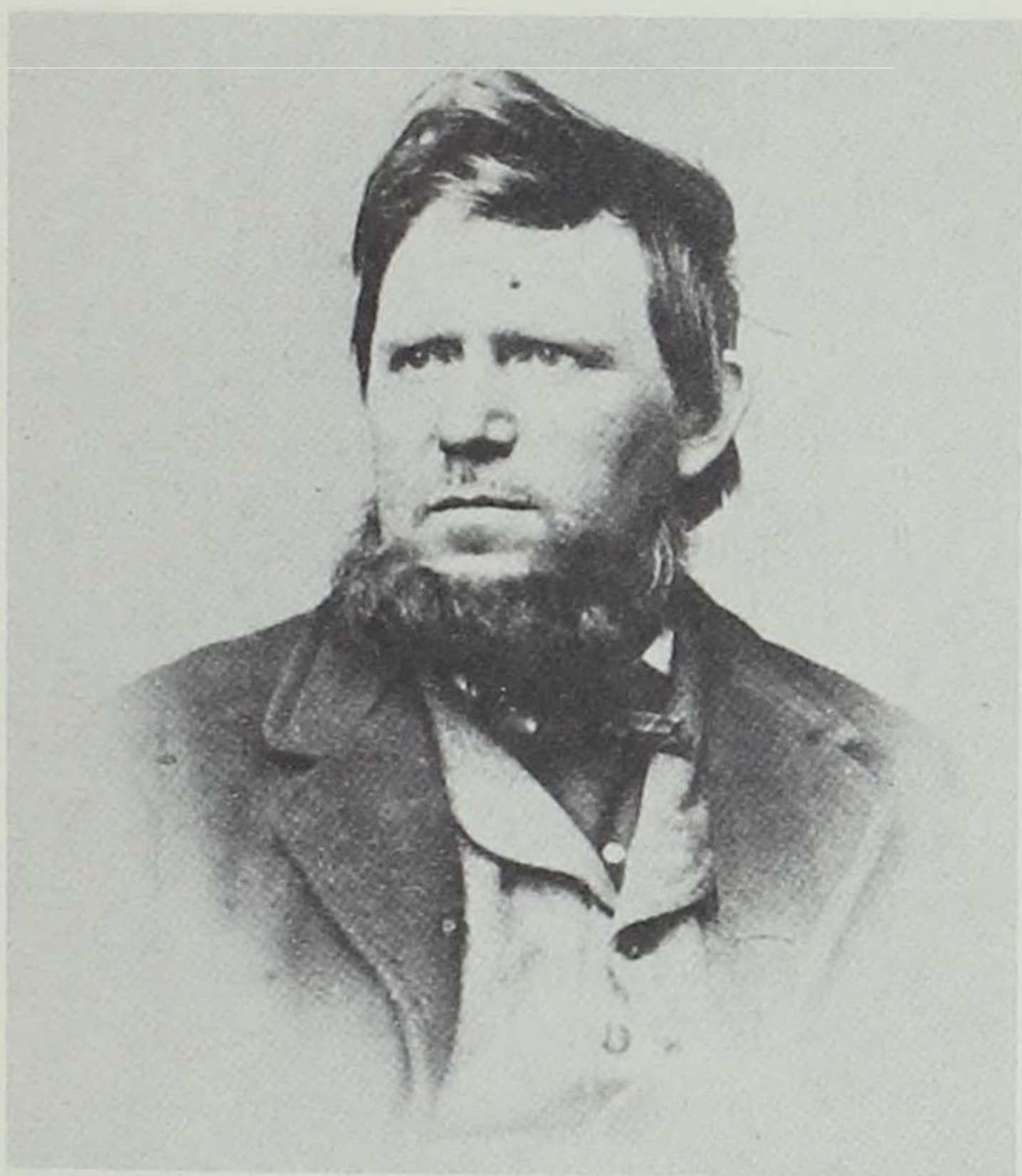
A lone locomotive had raced over the Rock Island railroad from Des Moines to Iowa City on the day before the Convention. Besides the engineer and the fireman, it carried Senator William B. Allison, his private secretary, Joseph Morgan, and Jacob Rich, a veteran Iowa journalist—all of Dubuque, prominent figures in the Republican party and intimate friends of Samuel J. Kirkwood. They were afraid that James B. Weaver of Bloomfield—with a record of distinguished service in the Civil War—would be nominated for Governor. His support came principally from the Temperance element of the party.

Kirkwood apparently had told the ambassadors of the locomotive expedition that he would accept the nomination, but he was slow in responding publicly. "Why in thunder don't you accept? Answer!" read an impatient telegram from Ed Wright. Finally the candidate, with an air of reluctance, wired his consent: "If I must, say yes for me."

Within five days of his inauguration as a third-term Governor, he was elected to serve a full six years as United States Senator, but, as he would not take his seat in the Senate for more than a year (on March 4, 1877), he served a little more than one-half of his third term as Governor before he resigned that office.

Just before the 46th Congress opened,





Robert S. Finkbine (courtesy Division of Historical Museum and Archives)

James G. Blaine was in Des Moines and, meeting his old friend, R. S. Finkbine, he asked him what kind of a Senator Governor Kirkwood would make. Finkbine's answer was: "Some day when you least expect it, when the matter is before the Senate involving a Constitutional question, he will get up, apparently without any previous preparation, and, in a speech of no great length, will discuss that question and present every point so clearly, illustrating it so aptly, that you will all wonder why you have not taken the same view and reached his conclusions."

On June 21, 1879, Mr. Blaine again met Mr. Finkbine, this time in Washington, and he said to him: "Your prediction in regard to Governor Kirkwood has been verified. The Constitutional question has arisen. The speech has been made. His solution was the true one. And it has been adopted."

In his brief autobiography, Kirkwood noted that,

I was elected United States Senator for a full term commencing with Mr. Hayes' administration in March, 1877. I resigned the 4th or 5th of March 1881 to enter the Cabinet of Mr. Garfield and served until April 1882. Of course, Mr. Arthur wished to be surrounded by persons of his own choice, just as Mr. Garfield had been.

Garfield died of an assassin's bullet on September 19, 1881, so it is obvious that Kirkwood did not resign his Cabinet post immediately. There was no friction with the new President. Kirkwood left the Cabinet because he honestly believed that President Arthur would prefer a man of "his own choice."

During Kirkwood's career in government, he had been elected three times as Governor, twice as a United States Senator, and once appointed to serve as a member of a President's Cabinet—the only man in Iowa history with this combination of honors.

Returning to Iowa City at the age of 70, still robust in body and alert in mind, he accepted the office of President of the Iowa City National Bank. *The State Press* of November 11, 1885, had this illuminating sidelight on banker Kirkwood:

It is not an everyday occurrence to see a bank president who has also filled the highest political offices in the country, out on the street soliciting money for a poor man; yet an errand of that kind brought Governor Kirkwood into stores and offices on Monday. 'Now, you know little Jimmy Donohoe down on the bottom,' said the Governor. 'He's been very sick all summer and is fast losing his eyesight; indeed he's quite blind now, and his wife is very feeble! . . . Does someone say, 'Why didn't the Governor give the money out of his own pocket?' Shame upon the thought. The Gov-



ernor is almost a poor man himself. He never wasted money, he never saved it for his own use. In the true Bible sense, he is a steward.

Although it had been Kirkwood's highest ambition to serve a full term in the United States Senate, he took the greatest pride during his retirement years in being known as "Our War Governor." Looking back upon this time of crisis in the nation's history, it was his firm conviction that Iowa regiments had been among the most decisive forces in winning the War Between the States. At the Reunion of the 22nd Iowa Regiment, held in Iowa City on September 10, 1890, Kirkwood spoke to the 168 members present. The full text of the speech has been preserved. It is quoted, here, only in part:

I want to say a few words to you on a subject of which I have thought much, of what was done by the Army of the West and the Army of the East; if you have not thought of it, think of it now. When the war broke out, all the southern states and the border states of Missouri, Kentucky and Tennessee to a large extent were in rebellion. The eastern armies fought bravely and well in a small space in Virginia, and stayed there until the war was over. You went to work and quieted Missouri. Perhaps you were not at Wilsons Creek (cries of 'Yes!'), but you went from Cairo to New Orleans, cleared out the Mississippi river and opened it to navigation. You had some discussion with the rebels on the way, but you opened the river to the sea and met your comrades at Vicksburg. You cut off from rebeldom all of Missouri, Arkansas, Indian Territory, Texas and western Louisiana, and their supplies of men and materials for strengthening the rebel army.

While the western armies brought back states into the Union, the fighting at Richmond, heroic and good though it was, did not produce the results achieved by the Army of the West. . . . We were the invading force, and it was our business to



*Mrs. Kirkwood*

conquer the South. . . . There is a reason why the western army accomplished so much and the eastern army so little. I don't say that all their generals were western men, but there is a reason somewhere and history will someday find it out.

At the close of his Railroad Report, which contained a brief autobiography, Kirkwood wrote: "My life has not been an eventful one at all, and I congratulate myself that I have got along through my three score years and ten as well as I have. My ambition nowadays is to keep my name out of the papers." But he remained in "the papers" for the rest of his life. In 1892, ex-Governor Buren R. Sherman organized a gathering of old friends in Iowa City to honor the "War Governor" at his home on Kirkwood Avenue. In 1893, there was another ceremony—this one in Des Moines—but Kirkwood was too feeble to be in attendance. The ceremony, fully





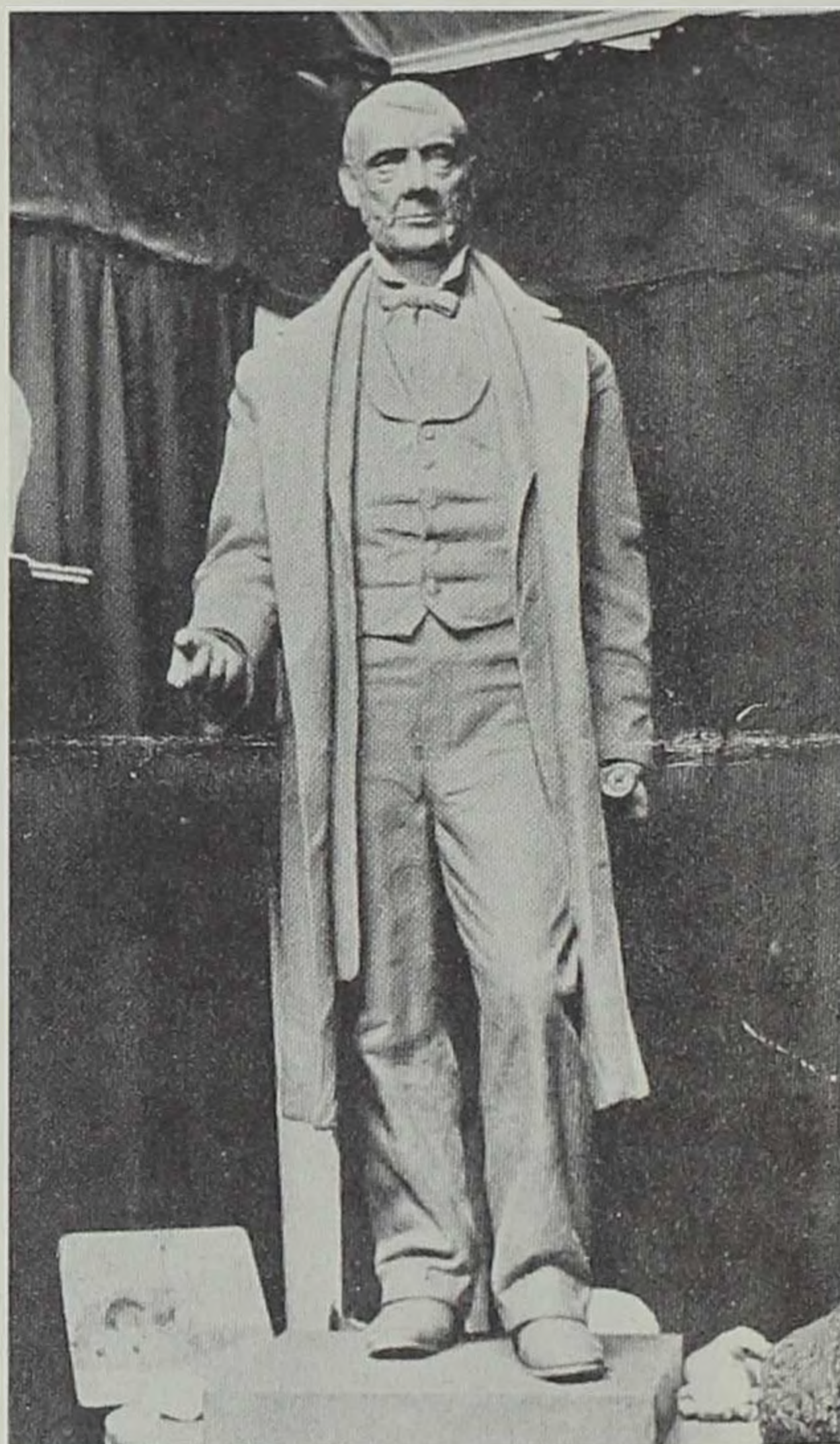
*The George Yewell portrait of Kirkwood, showing the politician in his dignified old age (courtesy Division of Historical Museum and Archives).*



reported in the newspapers of the state, marked the presentation of a large oil portrait of the old Governor painted by the distinguished Iowa artist, George H. Yewell. Again, there were speeches praising the elder statesman of Iowa. Again, the flowers of appreciation were bestowed upon the old man while he could still smell them.

But his time was running out. On September 1, 1894, after a brief illness, Samuel Jordan Kirkwood passed away, calmly, as though falling asleep. There were eulogies in the press throughout the state and the nation. And his physical presence was preserved not only in the Yewell portrait, but also in a life-size bronze statue in the Capitol at Washington, D.C. In 1864, the old House Chamber of the Capitol had been converted into a gallery for statues of distinguished Americans. Each of the states was allotted space for two statues. In the fullness of time, the people of Iowa chose James Harlan and Samuel Kirkwood to represent them.

Fifteen years ago, the author was wedged into a group of ticket-holders being conducted through Statuary Hall. The guide offered to identify any of the heroic figures in bronze if the sheep following him would bleat the names of their home states. There was a self-conscious pause, at the end of which the author timidly identified himself as a visitor from Iowa. The factotum gave me a supercilious look and raised his hand with dramatic deliberation until his index finger pointed toward the statue immediately behind him.



*Samuel J. Kirkwood by Vinnie Ream Hoxie*

Holding his arm outstretched for a moment of impressive tableau, he finally spoke the name of the Iowa statesman whom I had failed to recognize. It was not the name of the man whose daughter had married the son of Abraham Lincoln and who had insisted on repossessing his seat in the Senate after growing weary of a Cabinet post. It was the name of Iowa's political firecracker. The one word rang through the Hall like a cannon shot, "Kirkwood!" □