

## Comment by the Editor

### MATTERS OF FACT

When George Wallace Jones returned from Washington to his home near Dubuque in the summer of 1838, his constituents had a banquet for him at the Waples House. On that happy occasion, being toasted for his part in the establishment of the Territory of Iowa, he responded in his genial manner by relating the incidents of Miss Calhoun's aid in preventing her father from defeating that project, "which caused great laughter and shouting." Just how much he embellished the actual circumstances to accord with the conviviality of a postprandial speech his *Autobiography* does not indicate. The whole episode is so plausible and withal so probable that the truth of the material details need not be seriously challenged. While the story can not be positively verified, neither does there seem to be any conclusive reason for discrediting it entirely.

Nevertheless, a few obvious discrepancies may be mentioned. Perhaps they can all be explained by the natural lapse of memory during the half century between 1838 and the time when the former Congressman wrote his *Autobiography*.

"In 1837", he relates, "I introduced without any petition from the people, a bill in Congress to divide the Territory of Wisconsin and to establish the

Territory of Iowa." As a matter of fact, the *House Journal* for the short session of Congress ending in March, 1837, contains no record whatever of either petitions or bills on the subject of dividing Wisconsin Territory, while at the beginning of the first session of the Twenty-fifth Congress in December, 1837, Jones himself did present both the memorial of the Territorial Convention and of the Legislative Assembly but not the bill to establish the Territory of Iowa. In another place he strongly implies that the measure passed Congress in the winter, whereas the whole debate and final enactment occurred during the first week in June.

Some doubts also arise in connection with his version of Senator Calhoun's opposition. If the South Carolina Senator took the establishment of Iowa Territory so seriously, why did he fail to raise his voice against the bill when it passed the Senate on June 1st? Moreover, his confidence of being able to defeat the measure, on the ground that the time for the consideration of Territorial bills had expired, seems highly improbable. Could he have changed twenty votes? Scarcely, in 1838. At least not by raising a point of order which had slight chance of being sustained, or some other opponent of the bill would surely have resorted to that method of achieving his purpose.

When all of the flaws have been indicated, however, the essential facts of the story will still be found to correspond with the official record of

events. The connivance with Miss Calhoun to persuade or prevent her father from voting against the establishment of Iowa Territory is quite in accord with the character and legislative methods of George W. Jones. Indeed, a successful Territorial Delegate in those days had to be more of a lobbyist and diplomat than a statesman. That Calhoun was opposed to the Iowa bill may be reasonably assumed, though the *Senate Journal* and *Congressional Globe* contain no clue to his position. There is no evidence that Calhoun was present when the bill passed the Senate on June 1st. No votes were recorded that day and he made no remarks. His absence would account for his failure to protest at that time. Likewise, on June 6th, when the question of concurring in the House amendments was before the Senate, Senator Calhoun did not participate in the debate nor does his name appear among those voting at the end — which may be construed to corroborate Jones's recollection of the occasion. Yet there is nothing in the record to indicate that he was in the Senate at all that day.

Until some malicious historian, with a disposition to affect the "modern manner" of exposing heroes and destroying pleasant traditions, proves an alibi for Senator Calhoun and his charming daughter, let George Wallace Jones have the credit of rendering a very important service to Iowa.

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