



Pieces of Iowa's Past, published by the Iowa State Capitol Tour Guides weekly during the legislative session, features historical facts about Iowa, the Capitol, and the early workings of state government. All historical publications are reproduced here with the actual spelling, punctuation, and grammar retained.

February 1, 2012

THIS WEEK: A Different Oath for Senator Vale

BACKGROUND: Senator Jacob G. Vale was born July 7, 1821, in York County, Pennsylvania. In 1847, he married Anne Rex, and they moved to Iowa in 1850. Vale farmed in Lee County, and in 1853, he ran on an independent ticket for the legislature but was defeated. He moved to Van Buren County in 1856. In 1861, he was solicited by both parties to become a candidate for the state Senate. He was elected and served as the only independent senator in the 13th General Assembly. Vale also served in the 14th General Assembly in 1872. In 1873, Vale was the Anti-Monopoly candidate for governor of Iowa. Vale died February 17, 1875. His son, B.R. Vale, served in the Iowa Senate from 1888-1896.

This issue regards the cryptic notation in the *Senate Journal* for January 11, 1870, of a different oath of office being administered to Jacob Vale. Despite our research as to why this particular oath had been used in the swearing in of Vale, nothing was discovered. Although it is not out of the ordinary to affirm rather than to swear an oath, what is unusual is it being noted in the journal.

From the Journal of the Senate.

The Thirteenth General Assembly

Senate Journal January 11, 1870

The following oath was then administered by the President, and subscribed to by the newly elected members, except Senator Vale:

You, and each of you, do solemnly swear that you will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Iowa, and that you will faithfully discharge the duties of Senator to the best of your ability.

Senator Vale affirmed as follows:

I do solemnly affirm that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Iowa and to the best of my ability will perform the duties of the office of Senator. This I do under the pain and penalties of perjury.

Iowa General Assembly Website www.legis.iowa.gov

Information concerning Jacob Vale is available through the Iowa General Assembly Website. The Legislative Services Agency has partnered with the State Library in a project to scan and make available electronically all the biographical information, held by both agencies, about Iowa's past legislators. Because this project is ongoing, detailed information about every legislator may not be available at this time.

https://www.legis.iowa.gov/DOCS/LSA/History_Docs/14th%20GA/Vale,%20Jacob%20G.pdf

Select "Legislators" from the menu bar at the top of the page. Click on "Historical Information" and enter the name of the legislator. The biographical information will appear. At the bottom of this page, you will find a link to the information available through the State Library.

State of Iowa

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE,

Des Moines, Nov. 8th, 1871.

Hon. _____

Iowa.

DEAR SIR:

It has been the custom of each House, at the commencement of every session of the General Assembly, to cause to be prepared and published, a table, showing certain statistics in connection with the names of the members thereof. This is usually done in much haste, hence is frequently incorrect; especially in the orthography of names. In order to prevent errors of this kind, and to have the table in print at the commencement of the session, I transmit you this circular, with a request that you will fill up the blanks found below, and return to this office as soon as practical. You will please give the first name in full, and write plainly.

Name..... *Jacob G. Vale*
P. O. Address..... *Bonaparte*
County..... *Dunkirk*
Occupation..... *Farmer*
Nativity..... *Pennsylvania*
Married or Single..... *Married*
Religion..... *United Presbyterian*
If in the Service, regiment and rank.....
Years in Iowa..... *Twenty two*
Age..... *Fifty*
Weight..... *165 lbs.*

I send herewith a copy of the rules of last Session of the General Assembly, in which you will see the table above referred to.

Yours truly,

ED WRIGHT,

SECRETARY OF STATE.

In 1871, the Iowa Secretary of State passed around this "circular" to members of the Iowa General Assembly. This information regards Jacob G. Vale, written in his own hand. It is interesting to note the lines available to list religious affiliation and weight.