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January 30, 2013

THIS WEEK: A Distinguished Guest Visits the 25th Iowa General Assembly

BACKGROUND: GEORGE WALLACE JONES

George Wallace Jones was a pioneer settler, miner, politician, U.S. Senator from Iowa, and diplomat born in Vincennes, Indiana. He graduated from Transylvania University, Lexington, Kentucky, in 1825 and was admitted to the bar in 1826.

In 1827, he moved to Wisconsin (then Michigan Territory), and settled near Sinsinawa Mound, Grant County, where he engaged in lead mining, smelting, and merchandising. Jones was a delegate to Congress from Michigan Territory (1835-1836), and in this capacity was instrumental in securing the organization of Wisconsin Territory, as well as the appointment of Henry Dodge as territorial governor. He was Congressional delegate from Wisconsin Territory (1836-January 1839) but was defeated by James D. Doty in the election of 1838, partly because of his participation as a second* in the fatal Graves-Cilley duel.

Jones continued to hold his seat in Congress, claiming that his term of office had not expired. Doty contested this position, and Congress decided in Doty's favor. In 1840, Jones was appointed surveyor general of Iowa and Wisconsin territories, and held this office from 1840 to 1841 and from 1846 to 1848. After 1846, he made his home permanently in Dubuque.

He was one of the first U.S. Senators representing the new state of Iowa in Congress (Dec. 1848-Mar. 1859). A Democrat of the old tradition, Jones had strong Southern sympathies and at one time had been a slave owner himself. In the Senate, he supported the Compromise of 1850 and the Kansas-Nebraska Act of

1854, but his insistence on supporting the proslavery Lecompton Constitution for Kansas in 1858 cost him the Democratic nomination for the Senate in that year. In 1859, he was appointed by President Buchanan as U.S. minister to New Granada (Colombia) and served in Bogota until recalled by President Lincoln in 1861.

On his return to the U.S., Jones was imprisoned by order of Secretary Seward for allegedly writing a treasonable letter to Confederate leader, Jefferson Davis. Although indiscreet in writing to his old school-mate, Jones' letter was far from treasonable, and he was released by order of President Lincoln after serving two months. He returned to Iowa in an attempt to vindicate himself, but his political career was ended. He lived in retirement in Dubuque until his death. Jones County was named in his honor. *(From the Dictionary of Wisconsin biography)*

*The most common characteristic of a duel was the presence of a "second" for both parties. The seconds were men chosen by the principal participants whose job it was to ensure that the duel was carried out under honorable conditions, on a proper field of honor, and with equally deadly weapons. It was the seconds (usually good friends of the participating parties) who sought a peaceful resolution to the matter at hand in hopes of preventing bloodshed.

25TH IOWA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Twenty-Fifth General Assembly convened January 8 and adjourned April 6, 1894—an 89-day session. In the House of Representatives, there were 22 Democrats and 78 Republicans. In the Senate, there were 16 Democrats and 34 Republicans. Lieutenant Governor Warren Dungan presided over the Senate and Henry Stone was Speaker of the House. The 1890 federal census showed Iowa's population at 1,912,217. Governor Horace Boies ended his second term in January 1894, and Frank Jackson was inaugurated on January 11, 1894.

George Wallace Jones

Both House and Senate journals indicate a distinguished guest was extended an invitation to visit the Capitol and address the Twenty-Fifth General Assembly.

George Wallace Jones, was invited by Governor Jackson and by the General Assembly to visit and address a joint convention on the occasion of his 90th birthday.

To the Members, of the Twenty-fifth General Assembly:

GENTLEMEN: I take great pleasure in reminding the Senators and members of the House of Representatives of the fact that we have living with us as a citizen of the State of Iowa, a gentleman, who for more than two-thirds of a century has made his home with us. He is a native of Indiana, but shortly after he attained his majority he came to this part of the country, which was then known as the "Far West," and soon enjoyed the honor and distinction of serving as a delegate in Congress from the Territory of Michigan, his district embracing an area stretching from Lake Huron to the Missouri River.

He introduced a bill in Congress which organized the State of Wisconsin and gave that great state its name. Afterwards it was largely through his efforts that the State of Minnesota was organized, and to him was accorded the honor of naming its first territorial governor.

At his earnest solicitation, the territory of Iowa was organized, and he also gave

to it its name, and upon its admission as a state was elected as the first United States Senator from Iowa. He suggested the names of Clayton, Calhoun, Clay, Buchanan, Jackson, Fremont, Benton, Davis, and Polk to be given to certain counties of Iowa in honor of the eminent statesmen of that day, many of whom were his personal friends and colleagues thereby giving evidence of the friendship which he entertained towards these great national characters, whose names and memories he thus wished to perpetuate. The county of Linn he named in honor of Senator Linn of Missouri, bestowing that name upon one of his daughters at the same time.

This distinguished citizen was a drummer boy in the War of 1812, and was a prominent character in the Black Hawk War. He was at one time an equal partner with Daniel Webster, which firm entered lands from the government now occupied by the cities of Madison, Wisconsin, and Sioux City, Iowa. He was an intimate and personal friend of Andrew Jackson and in 1823 he acted as special escort through the state of Kentucky to the General when on his way to Washington to take his seat in Congress. In 1824, by resolution of Congress, he was made a member of the reception committee to meet Lafayette when that illustrious patriot visited this country.

The gentleman to whom I refer, the Hon. George W. Jones, is now living in the city of Dubuque, Iowa, strong and vigorous in health, and looking forward with pleasant anticipations to his 90th birthday, which will occur on the 12th day of April, next.

I would suggest as an appropriate recognition of the services rendered by this eminent citizen of Iowa, that an invitation be extended him to visit the capital of his State on this occasion of his 90th birthday, and that he be received by the members of the Twenty-fifth General Assembly in joint convention.



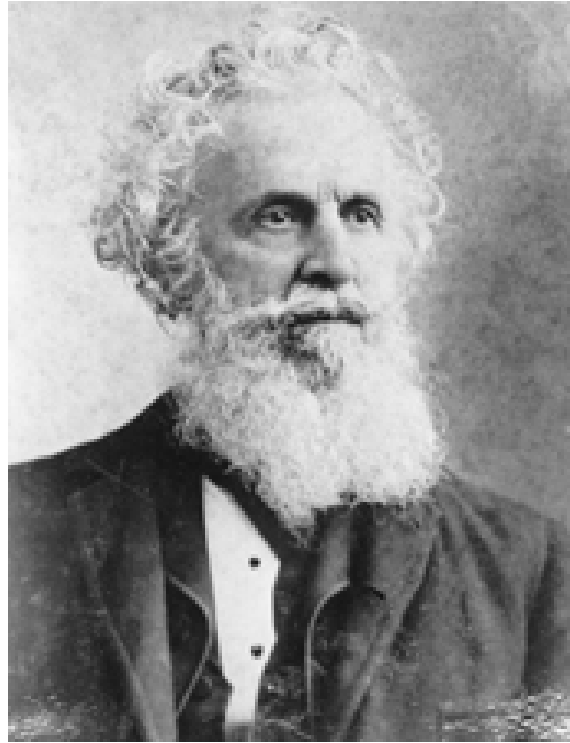
FRANK D. JACKSON, Governor

WHEREAS, In view of the special message this day received from the Governor of the State, relating to the 90th birthday of Gen. George W. Jones, our oldest living pioneer, lawmaker and statesman, and the one who gave to Iowa her name, and believing it appropriate for this General Assembly to give the event proper recognition; Therefore,

Be it resolved by the Senate, the House concurring, That General Jones be and is hereby most respectfully invited to visit this, our Capital City, and be received by the General Assembly on the occasion of his birthday, the 12th of April next, (this

was subsequently amended to read April 4th) if it shall then be in session; if not, then by the Governor and State officers in such manner as they may deem most appropriate for the occasion.

Resolved, That the Governor is hereby respectfully requested to transmit to the one who is the subject of this resolution an engrossed copy thereof at his home in Dubuque, Iowa.



George Wallace Jones
(b. 1804 – d. 1896)

Jones Replies in a Letter

DUBUQUE, IOWA, March 28, 1894

GENTLEMEN:

I acknowledge, with feelings of profound gratitude to his excellency, Governor Jackson and to the members of the General Assembly of our State, your communication of the 26th, informing me that the Assembly has passed a concurrent resolution inviting me to become the guest of the State on the 4th to celebrate the ninetieth anniversary of my birthday.

I accept the distinguished honor thus conferred upon me I and will, with the blessing of our Heavenly Father, be at Des Moines on the third of next month.

I am, with profound respect and heartfelt gratitude, your greatly obliged and obedient friend and fellow citizen.

GEORGE W. JONES