

Standard Form For Members of the Legislature

Name of Representative _____ Senator Johnson,
John A. — Represented Appella County Iowa

1. Birthday and place _____ ca 1826 near Gray? Kentucky

2. Marriage (s) date place _____

Ida Simon

3. Significant events for example:

A. Business _____

B. Civic responsibilities _____

C. Profession Lawyer

4. Church membership _____

5. Sessions served 7th and 8th General Assembly 1858 and 1860

6. Public Offices

A. Local _____

B. State _____

C. National _____

7. Death _____ Montana

8. Children _____

9. Names of parents _____

Johnson, John A.

10. Education _____

11. Degrees _____

12. Other applicable information Democrat

- He came to Ottumwa in 1854

death of their two oldest children, and not many years after, he received an injury to his knee, followed by blood poisoning, and for months lingered between life and death, attended by the highest surgeons that could be obtained in that part of the State, suffering such intense agony that the administration of opiates was almost constantly required. At the end of a year he was able to leave his room on crutches, but the final result was a stiff knee, which seriously interfered with his locomotion and ability to exercise, and made him a partial cripple for the remainder of his days. Politically, he failed to reach the highest points his early career presaged, and which he undoubtedly would have reached if he had not faltered in party allegiance. But he bore all these with calm philosophy; and I have often heard him repeat the lines of Pope:

All nature is but art, unknown to thee;
All chance, direction, which thou canst not see;
All discord, harmony, not understood;
All partial evil, universal good;
And spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
One truth is clear, Whatever is, is right.

He was an incessant reader, and this was the solace of his later years. He fond of history and books of travel; and of novelists who graphically describe human traits and social conditions as they really are. Of these, Dickens was his especial favorite, and on the wall by the side of his bed, hung a framed portrait of that author. He was kind hearted, indulgent, forgiving, and while intense in contest, cherished no malice, and took real pleasure in doing a favor. A fine sense of humor, a glow of animal spirits, coupled with natural refinement, were a part of his being. He was a free thinker in religion, broad in his views respecting public policies, and had but little faith in severe sumptuary laws that are more honored in the breach than in the observance.

In personal appearance, Mr. Dixon was somewhat striking. He had regular features, a resolute expression, a noble and expansive brow, a well-rounded figure.

Homer Thrall and *John A. Johnson* must have come to Ottumwa about the same time, in 1855. They were both there when I came. Mr. Thrall was a brother of Dr. Seneca B. Thrall, who is lovingly remembered by all those living during his time. Homer Thrall was a partner of J. W. Dixon, under the firm name of Dixon & Thrall. He remained in Ottumwa but a short time, returning to Ohio in 1858.

John A. Johnson was a Kentuckian and came to Ottumwa in 1854. He was a large, fine looking man, rather pompous in manner, and as I thought, rather brow-beating. This last impression I received at the very outset of my career as a young lawyer, for in one of my first cases before a Justice of the Peace, Johnson was on the other side, and as I conceived, endeavored to intimidate me by the superiority of his learning and his aggressive bearing. But I later came to know that, not-

withstanding all this, he was a very generous and kind-hearted man. He was a radical Democrat of the southern school. He was regarded one of the leaders of the bar when I went there. In 1858 he was elected to the State Senate from Wapello County, and served in the Seventh and Eighth General Assemblies, where he made himself conspicuous by the advocacy of his southern views. Soon after the expiration of his official period he removed to Helena, Montana, where he became prominent as a lawyer and politician. I saw him about twenty-five years afterward, when he called upon me at Kansas City, Missouri. I was glad to see him. Years of discipline and varying fortune had greatly toned down the lofty attitudes of his earlier days and brought his finer qualities to the surface. He was really a man of force and ability. He died in Montana some years ago.

Duane F. Gaylord came to Ottumwa the same year that the State was admitted into the Union, 1846. He at once took an active part in public affairs. In 1849 he was elected Sheriff of the County, succeeding Joseph Hayne in that office. Upon the organization of the City of Ottumwa, under its special charter in 1857, he became its first Mayor. The following official role of the officers then elected will carry some historic interest:

Duane F. Gaylord, Mayor; James D. Devin, Recorder; S. W. Summers, solicitor; Erastus Washburn, Treasurer; Hosea B. Jones, Assessor; John A. Newman, Marshal; S. W. Hartwell, Engineer.

Mr. Gaylord did not enter upon the study of law until in middle life. He was admitted to the bar of Wapello County, and in 1857 or 1858 entered into legal partnership with John A. Johnson under the firm name of Johnson & Gaylord. In the early sixties he removed to Cass County, where he remained until his death. He was a Democrat in politics and effective, as well as active. He was an excellent man of unquestioned integrity, and a valuable factor in the early history of Ottumwa and Wapello County. He was a native of Connecticut, and the first emigrant from that State to Ottumwa; George Dresser, who lived out beyond where the Judge Burton residence now stands, was the second, and myself the third. We three were, I think, the only Connecticut men in the County for several years.

Thomas Bigham and *A. W. Gaston* were active members of the bar when I came to Ottumwa. *A. W. Gaston* was then Prosecuting Attorney for the County. In the term preceding that, in 1854-1856, *Thomas Bigham* had been the County Prosecutor. Mr. Bigham was a character that will be remembered as long as anyone lives who knew him. He was from Indiana or Ohio, and came to Ottumwa in 1840 or 1850, I should say. He told me he had been a schoolmaster before and while studying law. He was middle-aged when I first met him. He was old-fashioned in both character and manner—plain, but kindly and sincere. He had been a student and was well-versed in legal principles and the elementary books. He naturally belonged to the common people and was well patronized by them. He