

Samuel J. Kirkwood, Thomas Mitchell, Thomas S.
Wright

ISSN 0003-4827



Material in the public domain. No restrictions on use.

This work has been identified with a [Creative Commons Public Domain Mark 1.0](#).

Recommended Citation

"Samuel J. Kirkwood, Thomas Mitchell, Thomas S. Wright." *The Annals of Iowa* 1 (1894), 581-584.

Available at: <http://ir.uiowa.edu/annals-of-iowa/vol1/iss7/11>

Hosted by [Iowa Research Online](#)

NOTABLE DEATHS.

EX-GOVERNOR SAMUEL J. KIRKWOOD died at his home in Iowa City, on the 1st day of September. He was close upon 81 years of age, and nearly half of his life was a citizen of Iowa. He was a native of Maryland, was educated in the city of Washington, and for several years was a clerk in a drug store at the National Capital. He taught school in York County, Pennsylvania, for some time, and in 1835 accompanied his father and family to Richland County, Ohio, and assisted in clearing up a farm in the heavy woods which then covered a large portion of that State. Tiring of the hard labor and privations of farm life in a new country, he decided in 1841 to study law, entering the office of Judge Bartley, at Mansfield. He was admitted to the bar in 1843, and in 1845 was elected on the Democratic ticket, Prosecuting Attorney for the county, in which position he served with ability for four years. In 1850 he was chosen a delegate to the convention which framed the present Constitution of Ohio, and took an active part in its deliberations. In 1855 he removed to this State, and settled on a farm near Iowa City, where he acquired an interest in a large flouring-mill on the Iowa River. But he did not remain long in private life. The great uprising of the American people against the extension of human slavery into our new Territories was then at its height, and a breaking off from former party affiliations was alarming the old leaders of the Whigs and Democrats. The Republican party was in process of formation, made up of men who were determined to resist the aggressions of slavery. A call had been issued on the 3d of January, 1856, for a State Convention to meet at Iowa City, on the 22d of February, to organize a Republican party in Iowa. Samuel J. Kirkwood was chosen a delegate from Johnson County to that convention. In the evening after its work had been accomplished, an enthusiastic session was held, in which several stirring speeches were made by delegates who afterwards became famous in State and National history. Among these was Mr. Kirkwood. His was among the most impressive speeches of that historic gathering, and from that day he became one of the trusted leaders and counselors of the new party. At the next election he was chosen State Senator from Johnson County, serving four years with marked ability. He was one of the authors of the State banking law enacted by the first session of the Legislature after the adoption of the Constitution of 1857, which first authorized banking in Iowa. At the close of his term he was nominated by the Republicans for Governor and elected over Gen. A. C. Dodge, his Democratic opponent, by 3,200 majority. His administration of the State Government for four years has never been equaled, and he has passed into history as Iowa's "Great War Governor." It was under his administration that the forty-nine regiments of Iowa volunteer soldiers were raised, officered and equipped, which did such honor to the State in the War of the Rebellion. Before the expiration of his term as Governor, Mr. Kirkwood was appointed by President Lincoln, Minister to Denmark, but declined the position. In 1866 he was chosen United States Senator to succeed James Harlan, who had accepted a seat in the Cabinet. In 1875 he was again elected Governor and before the expiration of his term, was chosen United States Senator for six years. Before this term expired, he was invited into Garfield's Cabinet as Secretary of the Interior, where he remained until after the tragic death of the President. He was now well advanced in years and retired to his pleasant home at Iowa City, where for the last ten years of his life he enjoyed freedom from public responsibilities and the profound respect of his fellow citizens. His private life was pure, plain and unostentatious, as his whole public career was patriotic and unselfish. He was actuated by the single inspiration of the public good. In the whole galaxy of Iowa's eminent public men, it is truth to say, that none ever held a warmer place in the affections of her people, or stood higher in their confidence and admiration. It is our hope, in some future number of THE ANNALS, to present a more elaborate study of his life and public services, with several illustrations.

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.