

James Wilson

ISSN 0003-4827

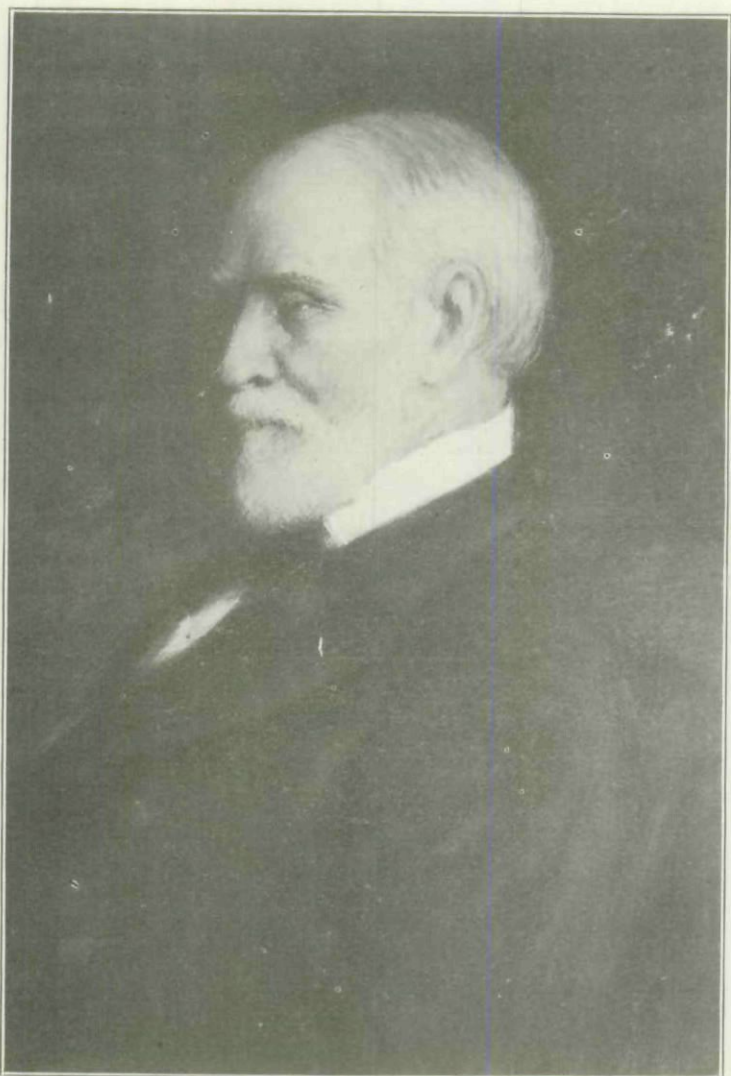
No known copyright restrictions.

Recommended Citation

"James Wilson." *The Annals of Iowa* 14 (1924), 233-234.

Available at: <http://ir.uiowa.edu/annals-of-iowa/vol14/iss3/8>

Hosted by [Iowa Research Online](#)



HON. JAMES WILSON

From a painting in oil by W. A. Reaser, purchased by and now in the collections of the Historical Department of Iowa.

NOTABLE DEATHS

JAMES WILSON was born on a farm in Ayrshire, Scotland, August 16, 1835, and died at Traer, Iowa, August 26, 1920. His parents, John and Jean (McCash) Wilson, brought their family to this country in 1851, first stopping in Connecticut, but removing to Perry Township, Tama County, Iowa, in 1855. After coming to Iowa James attended common school in winter and later Iowa College, Grinnell, until he secured an academic education. He chose farming for his life vocation. When the Civil War began he and his brother Peter were in partnership in farming and they agreed to continue this partnership to the end of the war, one to enlist and the other to remain at home and continue their farming operations, and at the end of the war to divide equally the profits. James remained at home, succeeded financially, and when his brother returned the terms of the agreement were carried out. In 1864 James was elected a member of the Tama County Board of Supervisors and served during 1865 and 1866. In 1867 he was elected representative and was re-elected in 1869 and again in 1871, serving in the Twelfth, Thirteenth, and Fourteenth general assemblies, and being speaker of the Fourteenth. He was the author of the law making it optional with each county whether livestock should run at large or be restrained. He was also the author of a provision that if the railroads then being built across Iowa were given by the state an extension of time in which to complete their lines and thus secure their land grants, that the state reserved the right to fix rates of fare and freight. During his service in the General Assembly he was chosen a regent of the State University and served from 1870 to 1874. In 1872 he was elected to Congress and was re-elected in 1874, serving in the Forty-third and Forty-fourth congresses. In his first term he was a member of the Committee on Agriculture, and of the Committee on the Washington National Monument. He became an authority on procedure in the House, and when Mr. Blaine, who was speaker in the Forty-third, was elected to the Senate, Mr. Wilson was given the place on the Rules Committee in the Forty-fourth, which Mr. Blaine would have had under Speaker Morrison, had he remained in the House. At the end of this term, March, 1877, he returned to his farm near Traer. March 30, 1882, Governor Sherman appointed him a member of the State Railroad Commission. In 1882 he was again elected to Congress and resigned as railroad commissioner April 1, 1883. This term he had membership on the Committee of Agriculture and the Pacific Railroads Committee. He secured the enactment of a law to aid in protecting cattle from the pleurapneumonia plague. On the last day of the term his seat was given to his contestant, Benjamin T. Frederick. Mr. Wilson returned home and engaged in writing articles on agriculture, contributing for a time to the farm department of the Iowa State Register, and writing for a syndicate of Iowa newspapers. In 1891 he was elected director

and professor of agriculture in Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, where for the next six years he did a great work in spreading helpful information on farming and stockraising. He was appointed secretary of agriculture by President McKinley March 5, 1897, and served continuously in that position throughout the entire administrations of McKinley, Roosevelt, and Taft, sixteen years, the longest service in the cabinet of any one in our country's history. His work as head of the Agricultural Department was monumental and far reaching in its influence on the prosperity of the country. What science and research and experiment by skilled helpers could do for agriculture in its various activities was done, and the department became recognized in America and Europe as being most efficient in aiding agriculture. On retiring from the cabinet in 1913 he returned to Traer. In June Governor Clarke appointed him with Henry Wallace to investigate agricultural conditions in Great Britain. A number of colleges and universities conferred on him the honorary degree of LL. D. The last few years of his life were spent in comparative retirement.

STEPHEN B. PACKARD was born at Auburn, Maine, April 25, 1839, and died at Seattle, Washington, January 31, 1922. He was a son of Stephen and Roxanna (Briggs) Packard. His education was obtained in common school and in Westbrook Seminary. He read law one year and in October, 1861, enlisted in Company C, Twelfth Maine Infantry, and was commissioned first lieutenant. He was afterwards promoted to captain of Company B of the same regiment. He was detached and put on special courtmartial duty administering the oath of allegiance to captured Confederates in 1862 and 1863, and also served for a time as judge advocate. He saw much active service at the front, especially in Virginia, and was honorably discharged in December, 1864. He removed to New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1865 and began the practice of law, which he continued for five years. In 1867 he was elected a member of the Constitutional Convention of the state, was later appointed chairman of registration, and after that service was appointed register of conveyances. In 1869 President Grant appointed him United States marshal for Louisiana, which position he filled for nearly eight years. In 1876 he was the Republican nominee for governor and was declared elected by the returning board. Francis T. Nichols, the Democratic nominee, on the face of the returns also claimed election. Both Packard and Nichols were inaugurated on January 8, 1877. Packard had possession of the building in New Orleans, the St. Louis Hotel, that had been used for a few years as the state capitol, and also had possession of the papers belonging to the office. Governor Nichols maintained his office in the Odd Fellows Building in the same city. The Republican portion of the legislature met in one building and the Democratic portion in another, each body endeavoring to function. Confusion was worse confounded by the existence of rival supreme courts. Only the presence of Federal troops prevented open conflict. President Hayes

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.