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January 27, 2016

THIS WEEK:

Ousting Governor Lucas without Official Notice

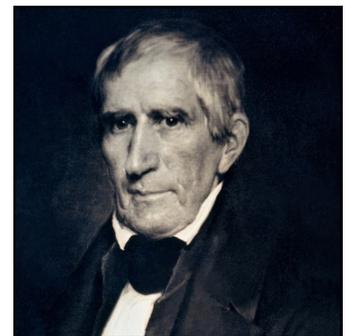
BACKGROUND:

President William Henry Harrison appointed John Chambers as Iowa's second Territorial Governor on March 25, 1841, just days before President Harrison died. Chambers arrived in Burlington on May 12 and assumed the responsibilities of Governor on May 13, 1841. Governor Lucas had traveled to Iowa City and was not in Burlington when Chambers arrived. Included here is a letter written by Lucas, to then U.S. Secretary of State, Daniel Webster, noting astonishment that he had no official notice of his removal from office.

Ousting Governor Lucas without Official Notice

Death of President Harrison

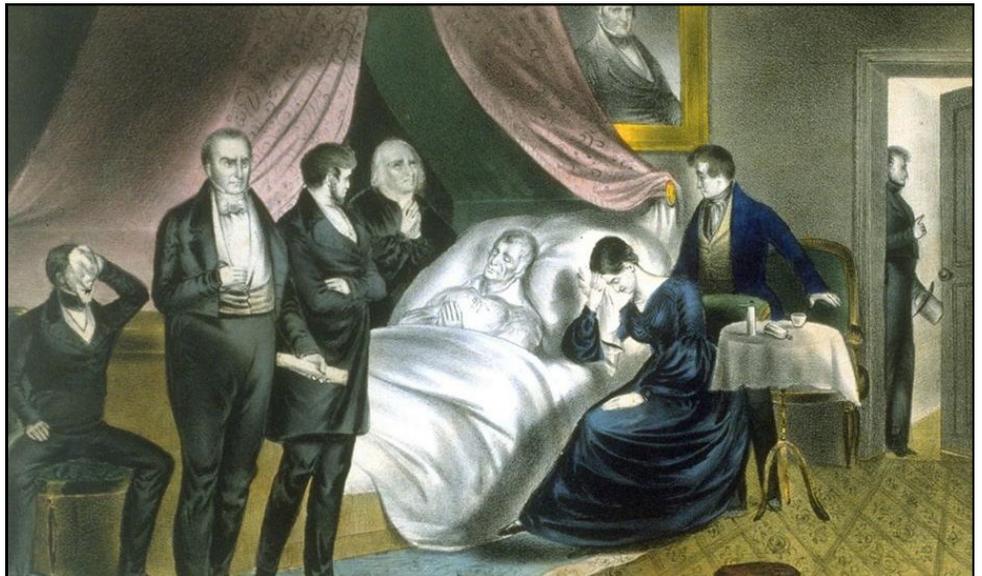
William Henry Harrison's inaugural address lasted nearly two hours, but in the days before electronic media, oratory of such duration was common. During the address, the new president wore no coat or hat. As a soldier, farmer, and outdoorsman, Harrison had spent much of his life in bad weather. But he was far from young now, and when he followed the address with a



**William Henry Harrison
1773 - 1841**

round of receptions in his wet clothing, it resulted in a bad chill. Within days, he had a cold, which developed into pneumonia.

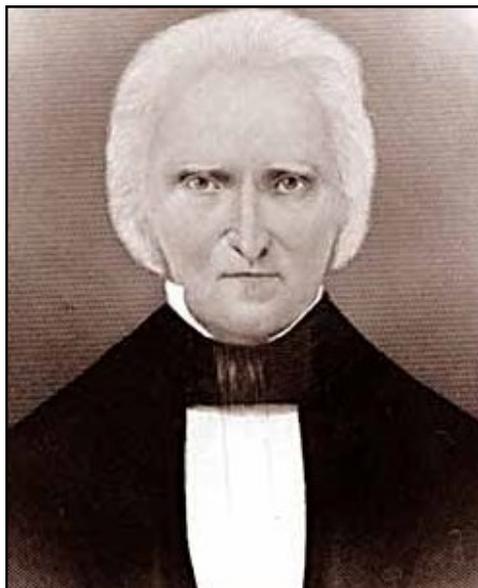
Doctors were called in, but their medical practices were crude: heated suction cups to supposedly draw out the disease, and the same bleeding



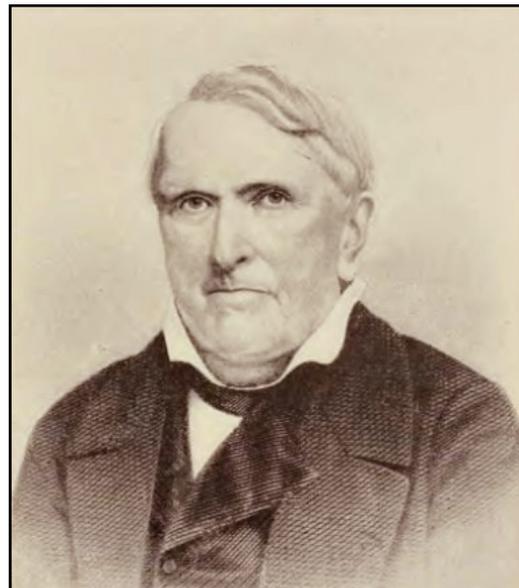
Death of President Harrison - April 4, 1841

tactics that had hastened the death of George Washington. All of this only weakened Harrison further, and three weeks after taking office, he was clearly dying. As a last resort, a number of Native American remedies were tried, including one involving the use of live snakes. Exactly one month after taking the oath of office, Harrison was dead. It was the most fleeting presidency ever, lasting one scant month.

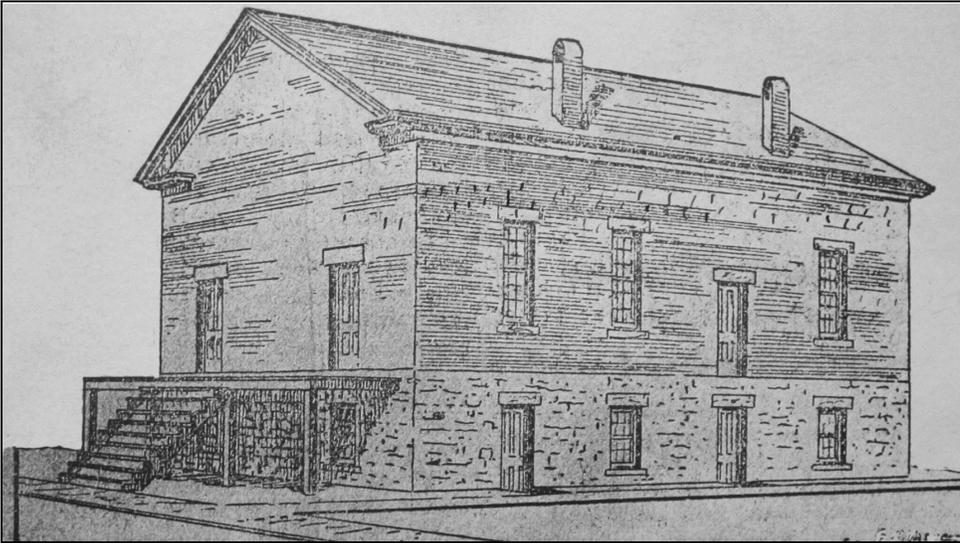
John Chambers was appointed by President Harrison as Iowa's second Territorial Governor on March 25, 1841, just days before President Harrison died. Governor Robert Lucas was not officially informed of this appointment and responded in a letter to U.S. Secretary of State Daniel Webster.



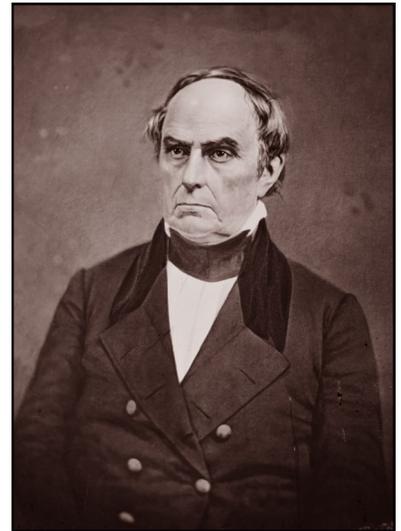
Governor Robert Lucas



Governor John Chambers



Sketch of the Zion Methodist Church (Burlington, Iowa), where the legislature of the Iowa Territory began meeting in 1838 in Burlington, Iowa.



**Daniel Webster
U.S. Secretary of State**



Following an 1841 proclamation that moved the territorial capital from Burlington to Iowa City, this building--the old Butler Hotel--was used as temporary headquarters of the Iowa territorial legislature while a new capitol was constructed.

The following is a letter written by Lucas, to then U.S. Secretary of State, Daniel Webster, noting astonishment that he had no official notice of his removal from office:

[Recorded by Governor Lucas]

Burlington Iowa Territory,
June 18th A D 1841.

DANIEL WEBSTER Esquire }
Secretary of State U. S. }

Sir,

I received by last evenings mail, your communication from the Department of State, dated the first of June, (which by the post mark, appears to have been mailed, at Washington City on the 2^d inst) informing me “That the President of the United States, had by commission, bearing date the 25th of March last, appointed John Chambers Esquire, Governor of the Territory of Iowa,” and advising me “after he shall have ar[r]ived in said Territory, and been sworn into office, to consider him, as duly qualified to act as such; and to deliver to him, the books, papers, and other property, of the United States, in my possession, or controle.”

This communication is the first, and only intelligence, of an official character, informing me of my removal, as Governor of Iowa Territory.— It appears, that Governor Chambers, anticipated the expectation of the department.— I have been informed, (though not officially) that he ar[r]ived at Burlington, on the 12th day of May, while I was absent at Iowa City, attending to official duties, and that on the 13th he assumed the duties of Executive of the Territory, without either reporting to me, his ar[r]ival, in the Territory, or awaiting my return to this place— Having previously, to my leaving Burlington, heard of the appointment of Colonel Chambers, I had left instructions, that should he

arrive during my absence, present his credentials, and file in the office of the Secretary, a certificate of his oath of office, as required by the Organic law of the Territory, that the Seals of Office, with all the appendages, might be deliver[e]d over to him, should he require it. This was done, at his request, on the 13th of May, since which time, he has been exercising the prerogative of Governor of the Territory.

A few days since, I returned to this City, and on enquiry, I learned to my utter astonishment; that Co! Chambers, had brought with him, no official notice of my removal, farther than his commission, and up to this time, he has made, no communication to me, either written, or verbal.

I do not mention these facts, by way of complaint, but from their novelty; as I believe such proceedings, are unprecedented, in the annals of our Governm[en]t—

I shall from the receipt of your letter, consider my commission, as Governor of Iowa Territory revoked; which would have expired, by limitation on the 6th of n[e]xt month.

I am sir

Very respectfully

Your obed S[er]vant

ROBERT LUCAS¹

¹ Autographed signature from the source:

Executive Journal of Iowa: 1838 - 1841 "Governor Robert Lucas" Edited by Benjamin F. Shambaugh, Professor of Political Science at the State University of Iowa, Published at Iowa City in 1906 by the State Historical Society of Iowa