

JAMES WILSON GRIMES (1816-1872)

James Wilson Grimes, governor of and senator from Iowa, was born in Deering, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire, October 20, 1816 and died in Burlington, Iowa, February, 7 1872. He graduated from Dartmouth in 1836, and in the same year went west and began to practise law in Burlington, Iowa, then in what was known as the "Black Hawk Purchase," in the territory of Michigan. From July 4, 1836, until June 12, 1838, it was part of Wisconsin territory, and in 1837-38 Grimes was assistant librarian of the territorial library.

After the formation of Iowa territory Grimes was a delegate to its assembly in 1838 and 1843, and in 1852, after its admission to the Union, was a member of the legislature.

He was governor of the state in 1854-58, having been elected by Whigs and Free-soil Democrats, and while holding the office did much to foster Free-soil sentiment in his state. On 28 August, 1856, he wrote an official letter to President Pierce protesting against the treatment of Iowa settlers in Kansas.



He was elected to the United States senate as a Republican in 1859, and re-elected in 1865. His first speech, delivered on 30 January 1860, was a reply to Robert Toombs, who had accused Iowa of passing laws in violation of the rights of sister states, and after this he spoke frequently, and was known as a hard-working member of the senate.

In 1861 he was a delegate to the peace convention in Washington, D.C.

He was a member of the committee on naval affairs from January 24, 1861, till the end of his service, and was its chairman from December,

1864. He strongly advocated the building of iron-clads, and the abandonment of stone fortifications for harbor defense.

Grimes was noted for his independence of character, which frequently brought him into conflict with his party associates in the Senate. Thus, although he favored a vigorous prosecution of the war, he considered President Lincoln's enlargement of the regular army in 1861 a dangerous precedent, and later he opposed a high protective tariff.

In the impeachment trial of Andrew Johnson, Mr. Grimes was one of the few Republican senators who voted "not guilty," and this act brought upon him a storm of condemnation which lasted but a short time, owing to the evident fact that his vote had been strictly in accordance with what he considered his duty.

Grimes had a stroke of paralysis in 1869, and in April of that year went abroad, resigning his seat in the Senate on December 6. He returned in September 1871, apparently improved, but died soon afterward of heart disease.

Grimes founded a professorship at Iowa College, at Grinnell, and gave money for scholarships there and at Dartmouth, receiving the degree of LL. D. from both Colleges. He also established a free public library in Burlington, Iowa.
