

John Bennett Dawson

(17 Mar 1798 – 26 Jun 1845)

Biographical Directory of the United States Congress 1774-1989

A Representative from Louisiana; born near Nashville, Tenn., March 17, 1798; attended Centre College, Danville, Ky.; moved to Louisiana and became a planter and was also interested in the newspaper business; unsuccessful candidate for Governor of Louisiana in 1834; member of the State house of representatives; elected brigadier general of militia and a few days afterward was elected major general; judge of the parish court; while a Member of the House was appointed postmaster at New Orleans, La., April 10, 1843, and served until his successor was appointed December 19, 1843; elected as a Democrat to the 27th through 29th Congresses and served from March 4, 1841, until his death in St. Francisville, La., on June 26, 1845; interment in Grace Episcopal Churchyard.

The National Intelligencer, Dec. 11, 1845

Death of Mr. Dawson, of Louisiana

Mr. Harmanson rose and addressed the House as follows:

It is, indeed, Mr. Speaker, a painful duty I have to perform, to announce to this honorable body the demise of one of its most gifted members, my friend and predecessor, Gen. J.B. Dawson, of Louisiana, member elect to the 29th Congress.

He called into public life, Mr. Speaker, at a very early age; and, guided by his noble nature, embraced the Jeffersonian doctrines, the great humanizing cause of equal rights; and he fervently believed, sir, if fairly carried out, they would produce a higher civilization, a more perfect happiness, a more refined virtue, and a larger liberty, than has yet fallen to the lot of man. And, to attain those great ends, he labored with a zeal, energy, and ability that gave him the unbounded confidence of his friends. And his great courtesy, frankness, and noble bearing won him the admiration and esteem of his opponents. Yet, Mr. Speaker, he had his faults--some thought, grave faults. But, sir, they were so overshadowed by his many great virtues, that his friends, at least, were blind to them. He was highly intellectual, accomplished, generous, and brave: of the keenest sensibility. He ever had a tear of sympathy for the afflicted and oppressed. His purse was ever open to relieve distress. As to fear, he was an utter stranger to it. Indeed, sir, he was the very soul of chivalry. He is gone, Mr. Speaker; he is gone, sir, cut off in the meridian of his life, in the zenith of his usefulness. His frail constitution sank under your cruel northern blasts. But he had the great consolation of reaching his beloved home--his beloved Tunica hills--and there to meet and mingle with his relatives and friends; and, Mr. Speaker, their hearts sank within them when they beheld but the wreck, the shadow, of their beloved Dawson. They saw that his days were numbered; but hope, that great comforter, had not deserted him. He promised he would soon get well. God, sir, willed it otherwise. And, Mr. Speaker, in the closing of his days he had the holy satisfaction of being surrounded by devoted friends, and an angel wife, to smooth his pillow, to sooth and comfort him--of drawing his last breath in her arms, and giving her his last, long, farewell look. His grave, Mr. Speaker, was attended by all the surrounding country, rich and poor, political friend and political foe. All paid tribute to his many virtues, and all forgot he ever had faults.

Mr. H. concluded by moving the following resolutions:

1. Resolved, That this House has heard with deep sensibility the annunciation of the decease of the Hon. John B. Dawson, a member elect of this House from the State of Louisiana, who died at his residence in that State in the month of June last.
2. Resolved, That this House tenders to the surviving widow and relatives of the deceased the expression of its sympathy on this bereavement, and as a testimony of respect for the memory of the deceased, the members and officers of this House will wear crape on the left arm for thirty days.
3. Resolved, As a further mark of respect for the memory of the deceased, that the House do now adjourn.

These resolutions were adopted unanimously. And the House adjourned until tomorrow at 12 o'clock.