

William Pope Duvall

(1784 – 19 Mar 1854)

Biographical Directory of the United States Congress 1774-1989

A Representative from Kentucky; born in Mount Comfort, near Richmond, Virginia, in 1784; completed preparatory studies; move to Kentucky; studied law, was admitted to the bar about 1804, and practiced; during the Indian hostilities of 1812 commanded a company of mounted volunteers; elected as Democrat to the 13th Congress (March 4, 1813 to March 3, 1815); resumed the practice of law in Bardstown, Kentucky; appointed on May 18, 1821, U.S. judge, east Florida district; Governor of the Territory of Florida under President Monroe, Adams, and Jackson serving from April 17, 1822 to 1834; appointed on November 4, 1841, law agent in Florida; moved to Texas in 1848; was the original of "Ralph Ringwood" of Washington Irving, and "Nimrod Wildfire" of James K. Paulding; died in Washington, D.C., March 19, 1854. Interment in the Congressional Cemetery.

The National Intelligencer, March 24, 1854

Deaths

In this city, on the morning of the 19th instant, Gov. William P. Duvall, of Texas, aged about seventy years. Gov. Duvall was a native of Virginia, went to Kentucky in his boyhood, where he studied law and entered on its practice, and attained considerable eminence in early life. In 1812 he was elected a member to Congress from the Bardstown district, and served as such during the sessions of 1813-14, and was an energetic and influential member in the prosecution of the war then being carried on.

In 1822 he was appointed Governor of Florida by President Monroe, and was re-appointed by Mr. Adams and by Gen. Jackson. By his administrative acts in that Territory he gave entire satisfaction to those to whom he was officially responsible at Washington, and to the people whose interest were confided to his management. In 1848 he removed to and settled in the State of Texas, where most of his children now reside. Professional business brought him to Washington some months ago and it has been the will of Providence that his mortal career should terminate at a distance from his home, but yet not among strangers; for in this city and in Congress he had friends whose kindness and attentions during his illness soothed his sufferings and tranquilized him in his dying moments. His illness he bore with uncomplaining fortitude, and encountered death with calmness and resignation. Gov. Duvall, whilst distinguished in public life, was much esteemed and beloved for his virtues and estimable qualities in private. He was a man of cheerful, equable temper, kind, sociable, sincere, and in all the accidents and exigencies of life reliable and true, and those who best knew him are those who will most deplore his loss.

The National Intelligencer, March 31, 1854

Gov. William P. Duvall

The late William P. Duvall, whose death took place at Washington on the 19th instant, was a type of the genuine American character -- apt, self-relying, and fertile in natural resources. He was born in Virginia of one of its old families. Some early pranks of a whimsical but innocent kind gained him the character of an "unlucky boy," prone to all kinds of mischief. The harsh treatment he experienced in consequences stung him to the quick. He considered himself misunderstood and undervalued. "I'll go home," said he, "and shift for myself." There was at that time in Virginia a rage for emigration to Kentucky. He had heard wonders of that country, and of the glorious, independent life of the hunters

who ranged its forests and lived by the rifle. He determined to go there and adopt that mode of life. His father considered it the passing caprice of a boy, being little aware of his wounded spirit and of the dogged resolution of his character. Finding, however, that he was not to be moved either by persuasion or remonstrance, he gave way to his humor, trusting that a little rough experience would soon bring him home again. He even gave him a well-filled purse to assist him on his wayfaring. The hunter in embryo asked for a horse and servant.

"A horse! Why you would not go a mile without racing him and breaking your neck, and as to a servant, you cannot take care of yourself, much less of him."

"How am I to travel there?"

"Why, I suppose you are man enough to travel on foot."

He spoke jestingly, little thinking the lad would take him at his word; but the latter was thoroughly piqued in respect to the enterprise, so he pocketed the purse, made up his pack, and girded up his loins for the journey.

"When will you come back?" asked his sister, as she hung round his neck weeping. "Never, by heavens! Till I come back a member of Congress from Kentucky. I am determined to show that I am not the tail end of the family."

Such was the launch forth in life of a youth but a little way in his teens. His pedestrian journey had its hardships. He was at one time in danger of being stopped as a runaway apprentice; after which he avoided houses as much as possible, lighting a fire at night in some wood or ravine, and sleeping before it in hunter's style.

At length he arrived at Brownsville, leg-weary, way-worn, and in shabby plight, having "Camped out" for several nights. The landlord of the inn was unwilling to receive a vagrant boy beneath his roof; he was about to turn him off, when his wife interfered.

"Where can you be going, my lad!" she said.

"To Kentucky."

"What are you going there for?"

"To hunt."

She looked earnestly at him for a moment or two "Have you a mother living?" said she, at length.

"No madam; she has been dead for some time."

"I thought so," said she, warmly; "I know if you had a mother living you would not be here." From that moment the good woman treated him during his sojourn with a woman's kindness.

Embarking at Wheeling on a flat-bottomed boat, called a broad horn, he floated down the Ohio past Cincinnati, then a mere group of log cabins, and the site of Louisville, where then stood a solitary house, until, after a voyage of several days, he landed near the mouth of Green river, and struck for the interior of Kentucky. He had relations in Lexington and other settled places, but he resolved to keep clear of them all, being resolutely bent on making his own way in the world without assistance or control. So he made for the wildest part of the country, camping out at night, and supping on a wild turkey which he had shot. In the midst of the wilderness he was accosted by a man in a hunting dress.

"Where are you from?" said the latter.

"From Richmond."

"What! in old Virginny?"

"The same."

"How on earth did you get here?"

"I landed at Green river from a broad horn."

"And where are your companions?"

"I have none."

"Where are you going?"

"Any where."

"What have you come here for?"

"To hunt."

"Well," cried the other, laughing, "you'll make a real hunter, there's no mistaking that. But come, go home with me; my name is Bill Smithers; I live not far off; stay with me a little while and I'll teach you how to hunt."

This was his first introduction to the hunting life. He soon became expert in "wood craft," and was a great favorite among the hardy hunters of Kentucky. He remained among them until, from the influx of population, game became scarce; and until, probably, he had satisfied the hunting humor. He now began to think he was ...

The Washington Post, April 21, 1952, p. B3

1812 Daughters Launch 60th Council Today

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Sunday's highlight was the annual memorial service at 3 p.m. in Foundry Methodist Church. Earlier, the Officers National Club of the society had gathered for its annual meeting and brunch at the Washington Hotel.

In the late afternoon, a service dedicating a marker to Capt. William Pope Duval, officer of the War of 1812, was held in Congressional Cemetery, 18th and E sts., se. Three states were represented at the service.