

Biographical Sketch of Hon. G. C. R. Mitchell

F. B. Wilkie

ISSN 0003-4827

Material in the public domain. No restrictions on use.



This work has been identified with a [Creative Commons Public Domain Mark 1.0](#).

Recommended Citation

The Annals of Iowa, 1(6) (Apr. 1864): 262-263

Hosted by [Iowa Research Online](#)

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF HON. G. C. R.
MITCHELL.

[From "Davenport Past and Present," by F. B. WILKIE.]

JUDGE MITCHELL was born December 26, 1803, at Dandridge, Jefferson county, East Tennessee. He was educated at East Tennessee College, (now "E. Tennessee University,") in Knoxville, Tennessee, and was a member of its first graduating class in the Fall of 1822. His parents having removed to Lawrence county, Alabama, he proceeded thither after graduating, and commenced studying law with Judge A. F. Hopkins, (now of Mobile,) and was admitted to practice in 1825. He practiced in Alabama until 1834, and spent a Winter in a tour among Eastern cities, and in the Spring of 1835 came West, after visiting St. Louis, Chicago, Galena and Dubuque.

Liking this portion of the country, and anticipating the results of its admirable location, he purchased a squatter's right—the tract of land upon which he at present resides. He erected a cabin, (which stood on Fifth street, just west of De Soto street,) and resided in it until 1837, or two years. At that time, what now constitutes Iowa was attached to Michigan, and until Wisconsin was formed, there was neither law nor officers of any kind west of the Mississippi. For several years the principal professional business of lawyers in the territory was limited to litigation in regard to claim titles, or "Squatter's Rights." Judge Mitchell added to this species of practice, somewhat, in the courts of Rock Island county, which were at that time organized.

In 1843, he was elected to the House of Representatives of the Iowa Territorial Legislature. He was nominated as Congressional Representative from the State in 1846, but was defeated.

He was elected Mayor of Davenport in 1856, and in April, 1857, was nominated by a meeting of the Bar, and elected Judge of the Fourteenth Judicial District—composed of the counties of Scott, Clinton and Jackson. He was elected to

this office by a handsome majority, although the Republican party nominated and ran a party and opposition candidate, and had a large majority upon almost every other one of their ticket. He filled this office until the Fall of 1857, and then resigned, owing to ill health, and with a design of removing to a warmer climate.

Judge Mitchell was always a Whig, until that party dissolved, or became inducted with Free Soilism, and other of its modern characteristics; since then he has acted with the Democratic party in full faith in its nationality.

As a jurist, Judge Mitchell takes a high position—he is profoundly discriminative—a keen, careful analyst, and one whose deductions are always reliably correct. His mental processes are seemingly slow, but in reality rapid, for while others would dash to a conclusion (often the wrong one) with an imperfect view of a few contiguous facts, he traverses the whole ground, omitting nothing, however seemingly trivial or great; and although he may be twice as long in evolving a question as another, he performs ten times the labor, and his conclusion is in the same proportion more worthy of credence. If he has one trait more prominent than another, it is his thorough *comprehensiveness*—his ability to include everything in his examination of a subject, and add to this a nice instinctive and cultivated perception of the character and weight of a fact, and one may see why he rarely goes wrong, or commits errors in conclusions.

In regard to his everyday life—that portion of a man's being which all are interested in knowing—we shall say much less than the excellence of the subject would admit. Wealthy, with cultivated literary taste, and a choice and ample library, he now enjoys life as only one surrounded by such circumstances can. Fresh, instructive and engaging in his conversation, he takes a high rank as a social companion, and as one who can be instructive, amusing and brilliant, without effort.

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.