

3-1-1934

Admission Into the Union

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Recommended Citation

Shambaugh, Benj F. "Admission Into the Union." *The Palimpsest* 15 (1934), 125-126.

Available at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/palimpsest/vol15/iss3/12>

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Admission Into the Union

When submitted to the people the Constitution of 1846 was vigorously opposed by the Whigs who insisted that it was a party instrument. They declared that its ratification would "prove greatly detrimental, if not entirely ruinous to the nearest and dearest interests of the people, by retarding the growth of the proposed State, in population, commerce, wealth and prosperity."

They were supported by the more conservative Democrats who protested especially against the article on incorporations and the article on amendments. A large majority of the people, however, were impatient for admission to the Union. For the time they were even willing to overlook the defects of the proposed Constitution.

Yet the Constitution of 1846 narrowly escaped defeat. At the polls on August 3, 1846, its supporters, according to the Governor's proclamation, were able to command a majority of only 456 out of a total of 18,528 votes.

In accordance with the provisions of the new Constitution, the Governor designated October 26, 1846, as the time for holding the first general election for state officers. It was on Thursday,

December 3rd, that the Senators and Representatives assembled in the Hall of the House of Representatives in the Old Stone Capitol to witness the inaugural ceremonies. Here in the presence of the General Assembly, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Territory administered the oath of office to Ansel Briggs, the first Governor of the State of Iowa.

On December 15, 1846, Mr. Dodge presented to the House of Representatives at Washington a copy of the Constitution of Iowa. The document was at once referred to the Committee on Territories, from which a bill for the admission of Iowa into the Union was reported through Stephen A. Douglas on December 17th. It was made a special order of the day for Monday, December 21st, when it was debated and passed. Reported to the Senate on the twenty-second, it was there referred to the Committee on the Judiciary. This Committee reported the bill back to the Senate without amendment. After some consideration it passed the Senate on December 24th. Four days later it received the approval of President Polk. The existence of Iowa as one of the Commonwealths of the United States of America dates, therefore, from the TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF DECEMBER, ONE THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED AND FORTY-SIX.