

## Unpublished Letter By Gov. James Clarke

James Clarke

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## UNPUBLISHED LETTER BY GOV. JAMES CLARKE.

William B. Conway, the first Secretary of Iowa Territory, died in November, 1839. President Van Buren appointed as his successor, James Clarke, at that time editor of the newspaper which he had established in July, 1837, under the name of *The Wisconsin Territorial Gazette and Burlington Advertiser*—the lineal predecessor of *The Burlington Gazette* of the present time. He filled the office until 1841, when the Whig President, Harrison, appointed in his place O. W. H. Stull. On the 18th of November, 1845, President Polk appointed Mr. Clarke Governor of the Territory, in place of John Chambers. He held the office until the following November. A Constitution for the State having been formed by the second Convention called for that purpose, and adopted by the people at the general election held on the 3d of August, he issued a proclamation designating the 30th of November for the meeting of the State Legislature. On the 2d of December he delivered his message to our First General Assembly, when, retiring from the office, he was succeeded by Ansel Briggs, the first Governor of the State of Iowa. Resuming his newspaper business in 1848, he lived until July 28, 1850, when he died from cholera, at the early age of thirty-eight years.\*

It was while he was Secretary of the Territory that he wrote the following letter to Gen. George W. Jones, who was then Surveyor-General of the Northwest territory. This letter is interesting and valuable as showing the condition of the territorial finances, and how the sparsely populated territory leaned upon Congress for the payment of its running expenses:

BURLINGTON, MAY 6, 1840.

MY DEAR SIR:—Supposing, from your extensive acquaintance with the members of Congress, that you might have it in your power to do me a very great favor, by exerting your influence in obtaining the passage of the appropriation to meet the arrearages in the expenses of the last Iowa Legislature; and being well convinced of your disposition to serve me, I sit down to make a brief but correct statement of the real situation of matters, in order that you may be in possession of all the facts connected with the subject.

\*The facts given above we have gleaned from a biographical sketch of Gov. James Clarke, by Rev. Dr. William Salter, which appeared in "The Iowa Historical Record" for January, 1888.

Congress, at its last session, appropriated \$20,750 to defray the expenses of our Legislative Assembly. The actual expenditures of the Legislature amounted, as can be seen by reference to the appropriation bill, to nearly \$34,000; thus exhibiting an indebtedness on the part of the Territory to various individuals of about \$14,000. The pay of the members and officers amounted to about \$17,000, which left in my hands, to be applied to the various other objects of expenditure, less than \$4,000. The members and officers, therefore, have all been paid; while the printing, amounting to some five or six thousand dollars, the stationery, house rent and furniture, fuel, wages of mechanics for work on building, &c., is all unpaid. I have transmitted three copies of the appropriation bill to Washington, viz., one to the Secretary of the Treasury, one to Mr. Jones, Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, and one to Chapman.\* By calling on either of the above named, you can most probably get a sight of it, should you feel desirous to do so. The appropriation of last year was entirely too small, even with the aid of the most rigid system of economy. I am no advocate for extravagance; but on the other hand would much regret to see the real interests of the community sacrificed to a false and niggardly notion of economy. Our expenses last year were but very little, if any more than the average cost of the different territories for several years past. If proper exertion is used, by those whose especial duty it is to attend to it, I think there can be no doubt but that the appropriation will be made. No man will vote against it who properly understands it. Please, therefore, if your engagements will permit, take some pains to explain it to members individually. A deep personal interest in the result makes me exceedingly anxious to hear of the issue.

No news—the Convention still popular. Write to me at an early day—remember.

Truly and sincerely, your friend,

JAMES CLARKE.

### A WORD TO SOME FRIENDS.

It is a pleasure to state that we have in hand quite a number of choice articles for *THE ANNALS*, covering many fields of Iowa History and including several biographical sketches. In the matter of making these contributions we have been met by much liberality, for which we are deeply grateful. But the publication of much of this material must inevitably be delayed many months. Our periodical appears only four times a year, and ordinarily contains but eighty pages. It is therefore impossible to present these articles with any greater rapidity than like contributions have appeared heretofore. But every one will be carefully preserved, with a view to its publication at as early a day as practicable. We have felt it incumbent upon us to make this explanation, to account for any seeming neglect or delay, and to crave the continued patience of our friends.

\*This reference is to the Honorable W. W. Chapman, delegate in Congress from Iowa Territory, in the Twenty-fifth and Twenty-sixth Congresses. He removed to Portland, Oregon, many years ago, and died there October 9, 1892.

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