

Edward H. Thayer

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died at Newton, Iowa, November 12, 1904. He was educated at the Academy in Wyoming, New York, and later attended Amherst College, Massachusetts, from which he graduated in 1846. He studied law in the office of Fillmore & Havens in Buffalo. (The senior member of this law firm was Millard Fillmore, afterwards President of the United States.) Mr. Skiff migrated to Iowa, reaching Oskaloosa in 1849. He removed to Newton in 1851, where he engaged in the practice of the law, in which he continued until 1861, when he enlisted in the army, becoming a member of Co. B, 13th Iowa Infantry. This was the regiment organized and commanded by Col. M. M. Crocker. Mr. Skiff was in the service three years, serving most of the time as Captain of the Company. After his return he engaged in mercantile pursuits, his hearing having failed so that it was impossible for him to practice his profession as a lawyer. He was chosen a member of the Constitutional Convention of 1857, and is believed to have been the last survivor of that body, instead of the late Dr. John J. Selman, as heretofore erroneously stated. The proceedings of the Convention show that he was a prominent and useful member of that body. It was related of Mr. Skiff that he had a passage at arms in court with the eccentric Judge C. J. McFarland, who proceeded to fine him because he would not obey an order of the Court to "sit down." Deeming himself in the right at the time the young attorney replied—"Fine and be ——!" Judge McFarland then ordered the sheriff to arrest him and take him to Des Moines for confinement in jail. The Judge soon ascertained that he could not find officers enough in Jasper county to take Harvey Skiff to Des Moines, for the reason that the people would not permit it. The Judge did not insist upon his order, and the matter blew over. He was a student and a man of wide culture and information. It is stated that he led the opposition to keep the word "slave" out of the constitution of the State. His later years were marked by great quiet, due perhaps to the loss of his hearing. To the end of his days he enjoyed the highest respect of the people of Newton and Jasper county. After the foregoing was put in type, it was learned that Hon. Aylett R. Cotton was residing in California during the past year or two. He was chosen to the Constitutional Convention of 1857, but was not present at its close. He signed the Constitution in Des Moines at the quarter-centennial in 1882. If living, he is also the senior surviving ex-speaker of the Iowa House of Representatives.

EDWARD H. THAYER was born at Windham, Maine, November 27, 1832; he died at Clinton, Iowa, November 7, 1904. He attended school at Orono, Maine, and graduated from the East Corinth Academy in 1850. When he reached the age of eighteen he came to Cleveland, Ohio, where he read law and was admitted to the bar. While in Cleveland he also attended medical lectures and did local work on some of the newspapers of that day. He was one of the first shorthand writers in that section of the country. He reported speeches by Stephen A. Douglas, Lewis Cass, Horace Greeley, Sam Houston, Louis Kossuth, Gen. Scott, and other distinguished gentlemen. It is said that he reported Gen. Scott's speeches in which he spoke of "the rich Irish brogue" and "the sweet German accent." Removing to Iowa in 1853 he first settled in Muscatine, where he practiced his profession three years. In 1855 he was elected prosecuting attorney, and two years later county judge. This was under the old law, when the county judges were supreme executive authorities in their counties. Two years later he was reelected. He was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention of 1860, where he supported Stephen A. Douglas for the presidency. He established *The Muscatine Courier* in 1861, and in 1868 founded *The Clinton Age*, with which he was connected to the end of his days. From the establishment of *The Age* he became one of the commanding influences in the city and county of Clinton and throughout eastern Iowa. For many years he was an influential promoter of railroad interests in

that portion of the State. He served as a representative in the General Assembly of 1876, and in that year was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention, where he supported Samuel J. Tilden for the presidential nomination. In the convention of 1884, to which he was a delegate at large, he was a warm advocate of the nomination of Grover Cleveland. He presided over the Good Roads Convention in Chicago in 1892. In that great movement he was a leading actor for many years. He was long a working and deeply interested member of the school board of Clinton. Governor Kirkwood appointed him a trustee of the State Normal School. He was one of the trusted men of his party throughout his more than fifty years in Iowa, one who always enjoyed the fullest confidence of the opposition.

SEYMOUR DWIGHT THOMPSON was born in Will county, Illinois, September 22, 1842; he died at his home in East Orange, New Jersey, August 12, 1904. At the breaking out of the civil war he enlisted in Company F, Third Iowa Infantry, at West Union, Iowa. He was soon appointed First Sergeant, serving in that capacity something over two years. In 1865 he was commissioned Captain of Company I, Third United States Heavy Artillery, in which rank he was mustered out at the end of the war, when barely twenty-one years of age. In 1868 he was admitted to the bar at Memphis, Tennessee. From 1881 to 1893 he was associate judge of the St. Louis Court of Appeals. He removed to Brooklyn, New York, in 1898, and opened a law office in New York City. Judge Thompson became pre-eminent as a law writer. His works are accepted as standards by the legal profession everywhere. He also wrote "Recollections with the Third Iowa Regiment," which was published in 1864. He had it in contemplation to revise this work for another edition. He was appointed by President Roosevelt a delegate to the Congress of Law and Jurists which met at St. Louis, in September. The law journals of the United States and Canada for September, 1904, presented elaborate notices of the life and works of this illustrious Iowa soldier, jurist and author. *The Chicago Legal News* concluded its article as follows: "Perhaps the whole life of Seymour D. Thompson may be summed up by saying that he preserved in an age steadily tending to moral compromises and the obliteration of the essential distinction between right and wrong, the integrity of the old Roman; that he illustrated in his every act and thought the best principles of American democracy; and that his success in his chosen profession clearly shows that ability and industry, coupled with high character, still triumph, as they have always triumphed, over the most adverse circumstances."

AARON BROWN was born in Marion county, Mississippi, June 7, 1822; he died in Mitchellville, Iowa, July 2, 1904. His father was a southerner and a slave-holder, but about 1825 removed to the north and freed his slaves. A brother became a free state candidate for the Kansas legislature and was brutally murdered on election day, on account of his anti-slavery principles. In 1844 Aaron Brown removed to Michigan and began the study of medicine. In 1849 he made the overland trip to California and remained there until 1852, when he located in Fayette county, Iowa, which was for many years his home. At the outbreak of the war he enlisted in Company F, Third Iowa Infantry; on the organization of the Company he was elected Second Lieutenant; in 1862 he was promoted to the Captaincy. In 1863 he was chosen Colonel and commanded the regiment through the siege of Vicksburg and led the attack on Jackson, Mississippi, where he was wounded. He was also wounded at the battle of Blue Mills Landing in September, 1861. Dr. Brown was a member of the State Senate in the 6th and 7th General Assemblies, and a member of the House in the 12th and 13th. He was Register of the State Land Office for two terms, including

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