



State of Tennessee
Department of State
Tennessee State Library and Archives
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WILLIAM HALL
(ACTING GOVERNOR)
PAPERS
APRIL 16-OCTOBER 1, 1829

(GP 9)

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SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The term of office of this, the first governor to hold office by accident was for only five months and five days; thus, it is not reasonable to expect momentous or critical developments during this period.

The sole message by the Governor to the Legislature contained warnings against the peculations of usurers and the softening of the country's currency, along with the usual exhortations to pay attention to the State's educational system, and the state of the boundary with Kentucky.

However, there were some administrative oddities. There was, for one, a petition for the pardon of one Joseph Phillipson, a young man convicted of forgery. This petition was signed by forty-six women, most of which were wives or relatives of prominent men in the contemporary public scene; i.e. Felix Grundy, Ephraim H. Foster and George Washington Campbell.

A brand new crime showed up in the calendar, at least to the extent that the criminal aroused enough public sympathy to contrive to get himself pardoned for committing it. This was the act of dealing at "faro", a rapid-fire gambling game which aroused the suspicions of the godly at the time.

There is another item which cannot be connected with any of the other material in the Hall papers. This is the deposition of a Dr. Peter W. Martin (of Sumner County), relative to the death of one "Deming", who dies of blood poisoning. Unconnectible though it is with any other case in the files, it is nevertheless a glaring index of the advance of antiseptics in the past century and a half.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

William Hall was born in Surry County, North Carolina, in 1775. He died on October 7, 1856, on his "Locust Land" estate near Castalian Springs, in Sumner County, Tennessee. In 1785, when he was ten years of age, William Hall's father moved with his family to Sumner County, Tennessee, where he purchased a fertile tract of land which was tilled with the usual success that attended the efforts of the early pioneers.

Men of such caliber and sterling character as possessed by William Hall were not allowed to remain in political obscurity. Neighbors new instinctively that such men could and would render valuable services in public affairs. Consequently, the legislative roster carries the name of William Hall of Sumner County as that county's Representative from 1797-1805. His legislative service was interrupted by the War of 1812 in which he rose to the rank of Brigadier-General. He served under Andrew Jackson in the Creek War and in the war against the British. A few years after the termination of military conflicts, he was returned to the State Legislature in the capacity of Senator from Sumner County from 1821-1829. During his term as Senator, 1827-29, he was elected Speaker of that body and succeeded to the governorship upon the resignation of Governor Sam Houston on April 16, 1829, serving until October 1 when he was succeeded by William Carroll. Two years later, Ex-Governor William Hall was elected as a Democrat to Congress, serving from 1831 to 1833. It appears that he had become a bit weary of public services, as he retired to his estate where he died full of years and honors on October 7, 1856.

Quite obviously, his term of governorship for five and one-half months was too brief to permit the discharge of any duties except those of ordinary routines. His message to the Legislature was largely of the nature of a homily upon morality, integrity, and good character, although he mentioned most of the topics so frequently enumerated by some of his predecessors. "An Israelite in whom there is no guile" would serve as a fitting epitaph for Tennessee's first "accidental" Governor, for Governor Hall was a man of sterling worth and irreproachable character.

CONTAINER LIST

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Note: letters to Governor Hall in letterbook of Governor William Carroll's administration; pages 55-61