

3

# First Governors of Wisconsin Were Not Elected

BY IVAN CLYDE LAKE

There was a time when governors of Wisconsin were not selected by popular vote. That saved a lot of wear and tear on the people.

A man who had gubernatorial ambitions made some kind of name for himself at one thing or another. And if enough persons repeated his name and rehearsed his exploits sufficiently in the Presidential ear, there was a possibility that he'd be appointed to a governorship.

But it was of paramount importance that he graze on the right side of the political fence. Wisconsin's three territorial governors knew which side to graze on.

Col. Henry Dodge, our first territorial governor, was a good Jacksonian Democrat, a rough and ready sort of fellow like the man who occupied the President's mansion in 1836.

Dodge had made more Indians bite the dust than you could shake a carbine at. Moreover, he was popular in the lead region of southwestern Wisconsin, the most populous and politically powerful section in Wisconsin's territorial days.

His name was mentioned often enough to Andrew Jackson of Washington, D. C., and after Jackson had scrawled his signature on the enabling act which erected the territory of Wisconsin, he appointed Henry Dodge the first governor, in 1836.

Four years later William H. Harrison was elected President but died a month after his inauguration. John Tyler succeeded him. Harrison and Tyler were Whigs.

A Whig was a different political specimen from a Jacksonian Democrat. A Whig wasn't as rough and ready. All his rough spots had been refined and he had even a semblance of aristocracy about him. And as for being ready —

well, perhaps he was as ready as any Democrat, but not so openly.

Dodge was too angular to fit into the Whig scheme, so in 1841 he was put aside and James Duane Doty was appointed in his place.

Doty was a splendid example of Whiggery. He was suave, polished, shrewd. He knew what to say and do, when and where and how.

There had been a lot of rumors about Doty; about how he had bought the Belmont legislation in order to make Madison, where his land holdings were heavy, the capital; and after the isthmian wilderness had been selected as the spot for the seat of government how a lot of the money that had been appropriated by Congress for erection of territorial buildings, hadn't gone for that purpose, and nobody knew exactly where it had gone unless Doty knew and perhaps James Morrison, the contractor, and they weren't disposed to tell.

Doty spent most of his three years as governor hindering legislative investigation into the mysterious disappearance of several thousands of dollars, and he did it successfully. But when his term expired, he was not reappointed. President Tyler handed the job to Nathaniel P. Tallmadge.

Tallmadge, a prominent United States Senator from New York, was a political hybrid. He was a Democrat who had Whig leanings.

The political picture of the time had a bit of surrealism about it. Dodge, the Jacksonian Democrat, won the election for delegate to Congress from Wisconsin over his Whig opponent, George W. Wilcox. In national affairs, Henry Clay, a Whig, sought the Presidency against James K. Polk, a Democrat. The latter won.

Now Tallmadge, though a Democrat, observed that the Whigs had a few good ideas, too. If he had been willing enough to admit that all their ideas were good he could have been Harrison's running mate in place of Tyler. He thus missed the Presidency even as Tyler gained it.

Tyler had Tallmadge on his hands and he was a little hot to handle. Wisconsin needed a gov-

F902  
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ernor in place of Doty and Wisconsin was a long way off from eastern political centers where Tallmadge had influence; so Tyler said, "Nat, here's your chance. You bought a lot of land in that Wisconsin wilderness. You can slay two crows with one pebble. You can be governor and look after your lands at the same time."

He was governor for a year, an uneventful year. Then he was retired and went to live on his estate in the town of Empire, Fond du Lac county.

Polk took Tyler's place as President and that was why Tallmadge was speedily retired. Polk wanted a more out-and-out Democrat than Tallmadge. Where could he find a man of whom he could be sure? In southwestern Wisconsin, of course.

Col. Henry Dodge was still going strong there, still a political power in the territory, and better known than ever because he had been down to Washington as a delegate, which was in the term used for a territorial representative in Congress.

So Dodge was appointed governor again in 1845 and continued in office until Wisconsin became a state in 1848. After that governors were chosen by popular vote.