



William Jayne

Dakota Images

Governor William Jayne (1826-1916) was a Springfield, Illinois, friend and physician of the Abraham Lincoln family. He was appointed the first governor of Dakota Territory by Lincoln shortly after his inauguration. A graduate of Illinois College and the Missouri Medical College, Dr. Jayne had been the mayor of Springfield four times, a member of the Illinois state capitol building commission, and a state senator.

In May 1861 he arrived in Yankton with W. E. Gleason of Maryland who was to be the territorial attorney general. The two men resided in a log cabin that became both the executive mansion and the territorial capitol. Although Congress had appropriated \$100,000 to organize the Dakota Territory, it agreed to pay the governor \$1,500 plus an additional \$1,000 for his duties as the Superintendent of Indian Affairs.

Based on information from the 1860 federal census, Governor Jayne proclaimed an election to be held on 1 September 1861 to choose a state legislature and a Congressional delegate. General J.B.S. Todd, a cousin of Mary Todd Lincoln, was elected to Congress. In the next campaign, however, Governor Jayne opposed General Todd, won the Congressional seat, and resigned the governorship on 4 March 1863. General Todd then contested the election and was eventually seated by the Thirty-eighth Congress in 1864.

Governor Jayne returned to Yankton in 1911 to help celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Dakota Territory. By coincidence, he traveled to South Dakota on the same train that carried Governor Robert S. Vessey, and both men became acquainted enroute to the celebration.

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