



J. B. S. Todd

Dakota Images

Brought to Dakota by Gen. William S. Harney's "Sioux Expedition," J. B. S. Todd stayed to launch the Territory of Dakota. Described by peers as a thorough soldier, an "old school" gentleman, and a literary scholar, Todd had a varied career as an army officer, sutler, trader, speculator, politician, and attorney.

John Blair Smith Todd, a first cousin of Mary Todd Lincoln, was born in Lexington, Kentucky, on 4 April 1814 and grew up in Springfield, Illinois. Graduating from West Point in 1837, he fought in the Florida Indian War and the Mexican War and served at forts on the western Indian frontier and in Minnesota, achieving the rank of captain.

In 1856, shortly after coming to Dakota with the Harney expedition, which had been charged with locating a military post on the upper Missouri, he resigned from the army to become sutler at Fort Randall. With Daniel Marsh Frost, he formed Frost, Todd and Co., built trading posts along the Missouri River, and acquired land for townsites. On one of the latter, Todd founded Yankton, which he later successfully promoted for territorial capital.

After negotiating the Treaty of 1858, which opened Yankton Sioux Indian lands between the Big Sioux and Missouri rivers to white settlement, Todd went to Washington, D.C., to lobby for the creation of Dakota Territory. When territorial status was granted in 1861, he became Dakota's first delegate to Congress. Commissioned a brigadier general by President Lincoln during the Civil War, Todd served in the Union army. In 1867, he was elected to the territorial legislature and chosen Speaker of the House. He practiced law in his later years and died in Yankton on 5 January 1872.

The first territorial legislature in 1862 honored J. B. S. Todd by naming a county after him. The original Todd County was located near Fort Randall between the Missouri and Niobrara rivers and ceased to exist when Nebraska's boundary was adjusted. In 1909, the South Dakota legislature assigned the name Todd County to the area occupied by the Rosebud Indian Reservation.

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