

= John Adair =

John Adair (January 9 , 1757 ? May 19 , 1840) was an American pioneer , soldier , and politician . He was the eighth Governor of Kentucky and represented the state in both the U.S. House and Senate . A native of South Carolina , Adair enlisted in the state militia and served in the Revolutionary War , during which he was twice captured and held as a prisoner of war by the British . Following the War , he was elected as a delegate to South Carolina 's convention to ratify the United States Constitution .

After moving to Kentucky in 1786 , Adair participated in the Northwest Indian War , including a skirmish with the Miami Chief Little Turtle near Fort St. Clair in 1792 . Popular for his service in two wars , he entered politics in 1792 as a delegate to Kentucky 's constitutional convention . Adair was elected to a total of eight terms in the state House of Representatives between 1793 and 1803 . He served as Speaker of the Kentucky House in 1802 and 1803 , and was a delegate to the state 's Second Constitutional Convention in 1799 . He ascended to the United States Senate to fill the seat vacated when John Breckinridge resigned to become Attorney General of the United States in the Cabinet of Thomas Jefferson , but failed to win a full term in the subsequent election due to his implication in a treason conspiracy involving Vice President Aaron Burr . After a long legal battle , he was acquitted of any wrongdoing ; and his accuser , General James Wilkinson , was ordered to issue an apology . The negative publicity kept him out of politics for more than a decade .

Adair 's participation in the War of 1812 , and a subsequent protracted defense of Kentucky 's soldiers against General Andrew Jackson 's charges that they showed cowardice at the Battle of New Orleans , restored his reputation . He returned to the State House in 1817 , and Isaac Shelby , his commanding officer in the War who was serving a second term as governor , appointed him adjutant general of the state militia . In 1820 , Adair was elected eighth governor on a platform of financial relief for Kentuckians hit hard by the Panic of 1819 , and the ensuing economic recession . His primary effort toward this end was the creation of the Bank of the Commonwealth , but many of his other financial reforms were deemed unconstitutional by the Kentucky Court of Appeals , touching off the Old Court ? New Court controversy . Following his term as governor , Adair served one undistinguished term in the United States House of Representatives and did not run for re @-@ election .

= = Early life = =

John Adair was born January 9 , 1757 , in Chester County , South Carolina , a son of Scottish immigrants Baron William and Mary [Moore] Adair . He was educated at schools in Charlotte , North Carolina , and enlisted in the South Carolina colonial militia at the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War . He was assigned to the regiment of his friend , Edward Lacey , under the command of Colonel Thomas Sumter and participated in the failed Colonial assault on a Loyalist outpost at the Battle of Rocky Mount and the subsequent Colonial victory at the Battle of Hanging Rock . During the British victory over the Colonists at the August 16 , 1780 , Battle of Camden , Adair was taken as a prisoner of war . He contracted smallpox and was treated harshly by his captors during his months @-@ long imprisonment . Although he escaped at one point , Adair was unable to reach safety because of difficulties related to his smallpox infection and was recaptured by British Colonel Banastre Tarleton after just three days . Subsequently , he was released via a prisoner exchange . In 1781 , he was commissioned as a lieutenant in the South Carolina militia , and fought in the drawn Battle of Eutaw Springs , the war 's last major battle in the Carolinas . Edward Lacey was elected sheriff of Chester County after the war , and Adair replaced him in his former capacity as the county 's justice of the peace . He was chosen as a delegate to the South Carolina convention to ratify the U.S. Constitution .

In 1784 , Adair married Katherine Palmer . They had twelve children , ten of them daughters . One married Thomas Bell Monroe , who later served as Adair 's Secretary of State and was appointed to a federal judgeship . In 1786 , the Adairs migrated westward to Kentucky , settling in Mercer County .

= = Service in the Northwest Indian War = =

Enlisting for service as a captain in the Northwest Indian War in 1791 , Adair was soon promoted to major and assigned to the brigade of James Wilkinson . On November 6 , 1792 , a band of Miamis under the command of Little Turtle encountered Adair and about 100 men serving under him on a scouting mission near Fort St. Clair in Ohio . When the Miami attacked , Adair ordered Lieutenant (and later governor of Kentucky) George Madison to attack their right flank while Adair led 25 men to attack the left flank . (Adair had intended for a subordinate to lead the charge , but the officer was killed before Adair could give the order .) The maneuver forced the Miamis to fall back and allowed Adair 's men to escape . They retreated to their camp and made a stand , forcing the Miamis to withdraw . Six of Adair 's men were killed ; another four were missing and five were wounded . Among the wounded were Madison and Richard Taylor , father of future U.S. President Zachary Taylor .

Recognizing his bravery and fighting skill , Adair 's superiors promoted him to lieutenant colonel . He was assigned to the command of Charles Scott , who would eventually serve as Kentucky 's fourth governor . He assisted in the construction of Fort Greeneville in 1794 , forwarding supplies to Anthony Wayne during his operations which ended in a decisive victory at the Battle of Fallen Timbers .

= = Early political career = =

Popular for his military service , Adair was chosen as a delegate to the Kentucky constitutional convention in 1792 . Upon the state 's admission to the Union , he was elected to the Kentucky House of Representatives , serving from 1793 to 1795 . He remained active in the Kentucky militia , and on February 25 , 1797 , he was promoted to brigadier general and given command of the 2nd Brigade of the Kentucky Militia . He was promoted to major general and given command of the 2nd Division of the Kentucky Militia on December 16 , 1799 .

Adair returned to the Kentucky House of Representatives in 1798 . When Kentuckians voted to hold another constitutional convention in 1799 to correct weaknesses in their first constitution , Adair was chosen as a delegate . At the convention , he was the leader of a group of politically ambitious delegates who opposed most limits on the powers and terms of office of elected officials , particularly on legislators . He was elected to the Kentucky House again from 1800 to 1803 . A candidate for a seat in the U.S. Senate in 1800 , he was defeated in an overwhelming 68 ? 13 vote of the legislature by John Breckinridge , who had been the acknowledged leader of the just @-@ concluded constitutional convention . In 1802 , Adair succeeded Breckinridge as Speaker of the House by a vote of 30 ? 14 over Elder David Purviance , the candidate preferred by Governor James Garrard . He continued to serve as Speaker for the duration of his tenure in the House . In 1802 , the legislature formed Adair County , Kentucky , naming it after the popular Speaker .

In January 1804 , Garrard nominated Adair to the position of registrar of the state land office . Adair 's was the seventh name submitted by Garrard to the state Senate for the position ; his approval by the Senate marked the end of a two @-@ month imbroglio between Garrard and the legislature over the appointment . Later that year , he was a candidate for the U.S. Senate seat then occupied by John Brown . Although Henry Clay supported Brown 's re @-@ election , Adair had the support of Felix Grundy . Grundy accused Brown of involvement in a conspiracy to make Kentucky a province of the Spanish government , damaging his popularity . Adair won a plurality , but not a majority , of the votes cast in six consecutive ballots . Clay then threw his support to Buckner Thruston , a more palatable candidate who defeated Adair on the seventh ballot . Grundy 's influence in the legislature continued to grow , and when John Breckinridge resigned to accept President Thomas Jefferson 's appointment as U.S. Attorney General in August 1805 , the Senate chose Adair to fill the vacancy .

= = Charged with disloyalty = =

Former Vice @-@ President Aaron Burr visited Kentucky in 1805 , reaching Frankfort , Kentucky , on May 25 and lodging with former Senator John Brown . During the trip , he consulted with many prominent politicians , Adair among them , about the possibility of wresting Mexico from Spain . Most of those he spoke with believed he was acting on behalf of the federal government and intended to expand U.S. holdings in Mexico . Adair believed this too , having received letters from his former commander , James Wilkinson , which appeared to confirm it . In 1806 , however , Burr was arrested in Frankfort on charges of treason . Officials claimed he in fact intended to create a new , independent nation in Spanish lands .

Convinced of his innocence , Henry Clay represented Burr , while Joseph Hamilton Daveiss acted as prosecutor . Harry Innes presided over the trial , which commenced November 11 . Daveiss had to ask for a postponement because Davis Floyd , one of his key witnesses , was then serving in the Indiana General Assembly and could not be present in court . The court next convened on December 2 , and Daveiss again had to ask for a postponement , this time because Adair , another witness , was not present . Adair had traveled to Louisiana to inspect a tract of land he had recently purchased there . On his arrival in New Orleans , he was arrested on the order of his former commander , James Wilkinson , then serving as governor of the Louisiana Territory .

Clay had insisted that the trial proceed in Adair 's absence , and , the next day , Daveiss presented indictments against Burr for treason and against Adair as a co @-@ conspirator . After hearing testimony , the grand jury rejected the indictment against Adair as " not a true bill " and similarly dismissed the charges against Burr two days later . After his vindication by the grand jury , Adair counter @-@ sued Wilkinson in federal court . Although the legal battle between the two spanned several years , the court found that Wilkinson had no solid evidence against Adair and ordered Wilkinson to issue a public apology and pay Adair \$ 2 @,@ 500 in damages . Adair 's acquittal and successful counter @-@ suit came too late to prevent damage to his political career . Because of his association with Burr 's scheme , he lost the election for a full term in the Senate in November 1806 . Rather than wait for his partial term to expire , he resigned on November 18 , 1806 .

= = Service in the War of 1812 = =

Adair rejoined the Kentucky militia at the outset of the War of 1812 . After Oliver Hazard Perry 's victory in the September 10 , 1813 , Battle of Lake Erie , William Henry Harrison called on Kentucky Governor Isaac Shelby , a popular Revolutionary War hero , to recruit troops in Kentucky and join him in his invasion of Canada . Shelby asked Adair to serve as his first aide @-@ de @-@ camp . Future Kentucky governor and U.S. Senator John J. Crittenden was Shelby 's second aide , and future U.S. Senator and Postmaster General William T. Barry was his secretary . Adair rendered commendable service in the campaign , most notably at the American victory in the Battle of the Thames on October 5 , 1813 . Shelby praised Adair 's service and in 1814 , made him adjutant general of Kentucky and brevetted him to the rank of brigadier general .

In late 1814 , Andrew Jackson requested reinforcements from Kentucky for his defense of the Gulf of Mexico . Adair quickly raised three regiments , but the federal government provided them no weapons and no means of transportation . James Taylor , Jr . , then serving as quartermaster general of the state militia , took out a \$ 6 @,@ 000 mortgage on his personal land to purchase boats to transport Adair 's men . The number of men with Adair was later disputed ; sources variously give numbers between 700 and 1 @,@ 500 . Many did not have weapons , and the ones who did were primarily armed with their own civilian rifles . John Thomas , to whom Adair was an adjunct , fell ill just before the battle commenced , leaving Adair responsible for all the Kentuckians present at the battle .

On January 7 , 1815 , Adair traveled to New Orleans and requested that the city 's leaders lend him several stands of arms from the city armory to arm his militiamen . The officials agreed under the condition that the removal of the arms from the armory be kept secret from the citizenry . The weapons were placed in boxes and delivered to Adair 's camp on the night of January 7 . At Adair 's suggestion , his men were placed in reserve and located centrally behind the Tennessee militiamen under William Carroll . From there , they could quickly move to reinforce whichever portion of the

American line received the heaviest attack from the British .

Apparently unaware of Adair 's request , that evening , Jackson ordered 400 unarmed Kentucky militiamen under Colonel John Davis to march to New Orleans to obtain arms , then reinforce the 450 Louisiana militiamen under David B. Morgan on the west bank of the Mississippi River . When they arrived in New Orleans , they were told that the city 's arms had already been shipped to Adair . The citizens collected what weapons they had ? mostly old muskets in various states of disrepair ? and gave them to Davis ' men . About 200 men were thus armed and reported to Morgan as ordered , just hours before the start of the Battle of New Orleans . The remainder of Davis 's men returned to the main camp , still without weapons .

As the British approached on the morning of January 8 , it became evident that they would try to break the American line through Carroll 's Tennesseans , and Adair advanced his men to support them . The main American line held and repulsed the British attack ; in total , only six Americans were killed and seven wounded . Meanwhile , Davis ' Kentuckians on the west bank had , upon their arrival in Morgan 's camp , been sent to meet the advance of a secondary British force . Outnumbered , poorly armed , and without the benefit of breastworks or artillery support , they were quickly outflanked and forced to retreat . Seeing the retreat of the Kentuckians , Morgan 's militiamen abandoned their breastworks ; Adair would later claim they had never even fired a shot . The British quickly abandoned the position they had just captured , but Jackson resented the setback in an otherwise spectacular victory .

= = Controversy with Andrew Jackson = =

Jackson 's official report blamed the Kentuckians ' retreat for the collapse of the west bank defenses , and many Kentuckians felt it played down the importance of Adair 's militiamen on the east bank in preserving the American line and securing the victory . Davis ' men insisted the report was based on Jackson 's misunderstanding of the facts and asked that Adair request a court of inquiry , which convened in February 1815 with Major General Carroll of Tennessee presiding . The court 's report found that " [t] he retreat of the Kentucky militia , which , considering their position , the deficiency of their arms , and other causes , may be excusable , " and that the formation of the troops on the west bank was " exceptional " , noting that 500 Louisiana troops supported by three artillery pieces and protected by a strong breastwork were charged with defending a line that stretched only 200 yards (180 m) while Davis 's 170 Kentuckians , poorly armed and protected only by a small ditch , were expected to defend a line over 300 yards (270 m) long . On February 10 , 1816 , the Kentucky General Assembly passed a resolution thanking Adair for his service at the Battle of New Orleans and for his defense of the soldiers accused by Jackson .

Jackson approved the court 's findings , but they were not the full refutation of Jackson 's report that many Kentuckians ? including Adair ? had wanted . In a letter that was quickly made public , Adair ? formerly one of Jackson 's close friends ? insisted that Jackson withdraw or modify his official report , but Jackson refused . This ended the matter until June 1815 when H. P. Helm , secretary to John Thomas , forwarded to a Frankfort newspaper remarks from " the general " that had been annexed to the official report . " The remarks " stated that the general was now convinced that the initial reports of cowardice by Davis 's men " had been misrepresented " and that their retreat had been " not only excusable , but absolutely justifiable . " The remarks , popularly believed to be from Jackson in response to Adair 's letter , were subsequently reprinted across Kentucky . The " general " referenced was in fact General John Thomas ; Jackson had never seen them . Helm claimed he sent a subsequent correction to the newspaper that published the remarks , but it was never printed .

Jackson did not discover the remarks until they were published again in January 1817 in response to a Boston newspaper 's criticism of Kentucky militiamen . He wrote to the Kentucky Reporter at that time , denouncing the remarks as a forgery . The Reporter investigated and published an explanation of how Thomas 's remarks had been attributed to Jackson . They did not reprint Jackson 's letter because they felt his claim that the remarks had been intentionally forged ? a charge which was now found to be false ? was too inflammatory . The editors promised that if their

retraction did not satisfy Jackson , they would fully publish any of his additional remarks on the subject . In Jackson 's April 1817 response , he implied that Adair had intentionally misrepresented the remarks , and reasserted that they had been forged , possibly by Adair himself . Adair believed Jackson 's references to the remarks as a " forged dish , dressed in the true Spanish style " was a thinly veiled reference to Adair 's alleged participation in the Burr conspiracy . As ostensible proof that he was not predisposed against Kentuckians , Jackson also implied that he had not reported additional dishonorable behavior by Kentucky militiamen during the battle . This letter thrust the dispute into the national spotlight and prompted Adair to resume correspondence with him both to defend Davis 's men and refute Jackson 's charges of conspiracy . In his May 1817 response , he reasserted his defense of the Kentucky militiamen at New Orleans and dismissed many of Jackson 's allegations as unimportant and untrue . He flatly denied the existence of a conspiracy , and chastised Jackson for making charges without supporting evidence . Responding to Jackson 's allusion to Spain , Adair recalled that Jackson had also been implicated with Burr .

Unable to provide tangible evidence of Adair 's alleged misdeeds , Jackson provided indirect evidence that a conspiracy was possible . His response , delayed by his treaty negotiations with the Cherokee , was printed September 3 , 1817 , and used complicated calculations based on spacing and distance , to argue that Adair had only half the number of men he claimed to have commanded at the Battle of New Orleans . Further , he claimed that Adair had ordered Davis to New Orleans to obtain weapons knowing that the arms had already been taken by other brigades under Adair 's command . Either Adair had given a foolish order , or he did not have as many men in his main force as he claimed . He closed by promising that this would be his last statement on the matter . Adair 's October 29 , 1817 , response was delayed , he said , because he was awaiting documents from New Orleans that never came . In it , he quoted from a letter to Jackson 's aide @-@ de @-@ camp ? cited by Jackson himself in previous correspondence ? showing that Jackson had been made aware of both the existence and the authorship of Thomas 's remarks in 1815 but declined the opportunity to refute them . He also defended his account of the number of troops under his command , which he had consistently reported as being near 1 @,@ 000 , and asked why Jackson had not challenged it until now . Finally , he claimed that not only did he retrieve the weapons from New Orleans under Jackson 's orders , but he rode Jackson 's horse to New Orleans to effect the transaction . Tradition holds that this letter prompted either Adair or Jackson to challenge the other to a duel , but friends of both men averted the conflict after assembling to watch ; no written evidence of the event exists . Tensions between the two eventually eased , and Adair came to comfort Jackson after his wife Rachel 's death in 1828 . Adair also campaigned for Jackson during his presidential campaigns in 1824 , 1828 , and 1832 . Jackson 's opponents compiled copies of his letters into campaign pamphlets to use against him in Kentucky during these elections .

= = Governor of Kentucky = =

Adair 's participation in the War of 1812 and subsequent correspondence with Jackson restored his reputation . He continued to serve as adjutant general until 1817 , when the voters returned him to the state House of Representatives . He was nominated for Speaker of the House during that term , and , although he was not elected , he drew support from members of both parties , largely because of his correspondence with Jackson .

In the aftermath of the Panic of 1819 ? the first major financial crisis in United States history ? the primary political issue of the day was debt relief . The federal government had created the Second Bank of the United States in 1817 , and its strict credit policy hit Kentucky 's large debtor class hard . Sitting governor Gabriel Slaughter had lobbied for some measures favored by the state 's debtors , particularly punitive taxes against the branches of the Bank of the United States in Louisville and Lexington . The Second Party System had not yet developed , but there were nonetheless two opposing factions that arose around the debt relief issue . The first ? primarily composed of land speculators who had bought large land parcels on credit and were unable to repay their debts due to the financial crisis ? was dubbed the Relief Party (or " faction ") and favored more legislation favorable to debtors . Opposed to them was the Anti @-@ Relief Party ; it was composed primarily

of the state 's aristocracy , many of whom were creditors to the land speculators and demanded that their contracts be adhered to without interference from the government . They claimed that no government intervention could effectively aid the debtors and that attempts to do so would only prolong the economic depression .

Adair was the clear leader of the Relief faction , and his popularity had been enhanced thanks to his lengthy and public dispute with Jackson . In the 1820 gubernatorial election , he was elected as Kentucky 's chief executive over three fellow Democratic @-@ Republicans . Adair garnered 20 @,@ 493 votes ; U.S. Senator William Logan finished second with 19 @,@ 497 , fellow veteran Joseph Desha received 12 @,@ 419 , and Colonel Anthony Butler mustered only 9 @,@ 567 votes . Proponents of debt relief measures also won majorities in both houses of the General Assembly .

= = = Debt relief = = =

Kentucky historian Lowell H. Harrison opined that the most important measure implemented during Adair 's administration was the creation of the Bank of the Commonwealth in 1820 . The bank made generous loans and liberally issued paper money . Although bank notes issued by the Bank of the Commonwealth quickly fell well below par , creditors who refused to accept these devalued notes had to wait two years before seeking replevin . To inspire confidence in the devalued notes , Adair mandated that all officers of the state receive their salaries in notes issued by the Bank of the Commonwealth .

The state 's other bank , the Bank of Kentucky , adhered to more conservative banking practices . While this held the value of its notes closer to par , it also rendered loans less available , which angered relief @-@ minded legislators ; consequently , they revoked the bank 's charter in December 1822 . Adair oversaw the abolition of the practice of incarceration for debt , and sanctioned rigorous anti @-@ gambling legislation . Legislators also exempted from forced sale the items then considered necessary for making a living ? a horse , a plow , a hoe , and an ax .

The Kentucky Court of Appeals , then the state 's court of last resort , struck down the law ordering a two @-@ year stay of replevin because it impaired the obligation of contracts . At about the same time , the U.S. Supreme Court issued its decision in the case of Green v. Biddle , holding that land claims granted by Virginia in the District of Kentucky before Kentucky became a separate state took precedence over those later granted by the state of Kentucky if the two were in conflict . Adair denounced this decision in an 1823 message to the legislature , warning against federal and judicial interference in the will of the people , expressed through the legislature . Emboldened by Adair 's message , Relief partisans sought to remove the three justices of the state Court of Appeals , as well as James Clark , a lower court judge who had issued a similar ruling , from the bench . The judges were spared when their opponents failed to obtain the two @-@ thirds majority required for removal .

= = = Other matters of Adair 's term = = =

Adair urged legislators to create a public school system . In response , the General Assembly passed an act creating a state " Literary Fund " which received half of the clear profits accrued by the Bank of the Commonwealth . The fund was to be available , proportionally , to each of the state 's counties for the establishment of " a system of general education " . In the tumultuous economic environment , however , legislators routinely voted to borrow from the Literary Fund to pay for other priorities , chiefly the construction of internal improvements .

Adair 's lieutenant governor , William T. Barry , and John Pope , Secretary of State under Adair 's predecessor , headed a six @-@ man committee authorized by the act to study the creation of a system of common schools . The " Barry Report , " delivered to the legislature in December 1822 , was lauded by such luminaries as John Adams , Thomas Jefferson , and James Madison . Authored by committee member Amos Kendall , it criticized the idea of land grant academies then prevalent in the state as unworkable outside affluent towns . It also concluded that the Literary Fund alone was insufficient for funding a system of common schools . The report recommended that funds only be

made available to counties that imposed a county tax for the benefit of the public school system . Legislators largely ignored the report , a decision Kentucky historian Thomas D. Clark called " one of the most egregious blunders in American educational history " .

Adair 's endorsement of the Missouri Compromise was instrumental in securing its passage by Kentucky legislators . He advocated prison reform and better treatment of the insane . He also oversaw the enactment of a plan for internal improvements , including improved navigation on the Ohio River .

= = Later life = =

Barred from seeking immediate re @-@ election by the state constitution , Adair retired to his farm in Mercer County at the expiration of his term as governor . Shortly after returning to private life , he began to complain about the low value of Bank of the Commonwealth notes ? then worth about half par ? and petitioned the legislature to remedy the situation . The complaint of a former Relief Party governor over the ill effects of pro @-@ relief legislation prompted wry celebration among members of the Anti @-@ Relief faction .

Adair made one final contribution to the public when he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives as a Jackson Democrat in 1831 . During the 22nd Congress , he served on the Committee on Military Affairs . During his term , he made only one speech , and it was so inaudible that no one knew what position he was advocating . The House reporter speculated that it concerned mounting Federal troops on horseback . He did not run for re @-@ election in 1833 , and left public life for good .

= = Death and legacy = =

He died at home in Harrodsburg on May 19 , 1840 , and was buried on the grounds of his estate , White Hall . In 1872 , his remains were moved to the Frankfort Cemetery , by the state capitol , and the Commonwealth erected a marker over his grave there .

In addition to Adair County in Kentucky , Adair County , Missouri , Adair County , Iowa , and the towns of Adairville , Kentucky , and Adair , Iowa , were named in his honor .