

= James W. Stephenson =

James W. Stephenson ( 1806 ? August 1838 ) was an American militia officer and politician from the state of Illinois . He was born in Virginia but spent most of his youth in Edwardsville , Illinois . In 1825 he was indicted for the murder of a family acquaintance , but never went to trial . Upon the outbreak of the Black Hawk War in 1832 , Stephenson raised a company and saw combat , suffering severe wounds at the Battle of Waddams Grove . After the war ended Stephenson entered public life , and served as a member of the Illinois State Senate in 1834 . In December 1837 Stephenson was nominated as the Democratic candidate for Governor of Illinois . Within six months of his nomination , accusations of embezzlement were leveled against him , and he was forced to withdraw from the election . In August 1838 , Stephenson died at home of tuberculosis .

= = Early life = =

James W. Stephenson was born in Virginia in 1806 , the oldest son of Benjamin Stephenson and his wife , Lucy , and was named in honor of his grandfather and uncle . The Stephenson family came to Edwardsville from Kaskaskia in 1816 , and in 1820 the family moved into the Benjamin Stephenson House in Edwardsville .

On January 29 , 1825 , while at the Wiggins Hotel in lower town , area resident Daniel D. Smith was stabbed to death following an argument with James Stephenson , James Henry and Palemon Winchester . Smith was stabbed in the neck ; as those present attended to him , he uttered " Winchester " and died . Reports in Edwardsville 's The Spectator indicated that Smith was " killed in an affray " at the Stephenson House . James W. Stephenson , James D. Henry and Palemon Winchester were indicted for Smith 's murder . All three men were charged with the crime , though only Stephenson and Henry were released on bond .

Winchester was the only defendant to face trial on the charges . Winchester 's lawyer argued that Smith was guilty of verbal assault against the defendant , and Winchester was found not guilty . The verdict was reported in The Spectator on March 22 , 1825 . In 1828 Stephenson left Edwardsville , and moved to Galena in Jo Daviess County where he made his home for much of the rest of his life .

= = Military service = =

= = = Background = = =

As a consequence of an 1804 treaty between the Governor of Indiana Territory and a group of Sauk and Fox leaders regarding land settlement , the tribes vacated their lands in Illinois and moved west of the Mississippi in 1828 . However , Sauk leader Black Hawk and others disputed the treaty , claiming that the full tribal councils had not been consulted , nor did those representing the tribes have authorization to cede lands . Angered by the loss of his birthplace , between 1830 ? 31 Black Hawk led a number of incursions across the Mississippi River into Illinois , but was persuaded to return west each time without bloodshed . In April 1832 , encouraged by promises of alliance with other tribes and the British , he again moved his so @-@ called " British Band " of around 1 @,@ 000 warriors and non @-@ combatants into Illinois . Finding no allies , he attempted to return to Iowa , but the undisciplined Illinois militia 's actions led to the Battle of Stillman 's Run . A number of other engagements followed , and the militias of Michigan Territory and Illinois were mobilized to hunt down Black Hawk 's Band . The conflict became known as the Black Hawk War .

= = = Black Hawk War = = =

As an officer in the Illinois militia James W. Stephenson served in a combat command capacity during the war . He first raised a company of 134 men in the early stages of the war as a captain ,

later , he was elected major and his company was taken over by Captain Enoch Duncan . Stephenson 's company was mustered into service in May and was released on September 14 , 1832 .

Stephenson fought in battles during the war as well as playing a role in the prelude and aftermath of some of the fighting . At the June 18 , 1832 Battle of Waddams Grove Stephenson led a dozen men against an unknown number of hostile Sauk . The battle , which descended into a hand @-@ to @-@ hand fight , resulted in three of Stephenson 's men being killed . Stephenson was shot and severely wounded in the encounter . Though Waddams Grove did little to put an end to Sauk raids in the region , it did help bolster public confidence in the militia . Less than two weeks later , Stephenson was involved in the aftermath of the raid at Sinsinawa Mound , in present @-@ day Grant County , Wisconsin . When news of the attack at Sinsinawa Mound reached Galena , Captain Stephenson set out with 30 soldiers to pursue the raiders . Once at Sinsinawa , they buried the " most shockingly mutilated " dead at the mound ; both of the men killed , John Thompson and John Boxley , had been scalped , and Thompson 's heart was missing . Stephenson followed the Sauk trail to the Mississippi River and stopped , the raiders having apparently crossed the river . Stephenson 's party returned to Galena without finding the group responsible for the attack .

In the week preceding another of the war 's major turning points , the June 16 Battle of Horseshoe Bend , Stephenson helped Colonel Henry Dodge and his men bury the victims of the St. Vrain massacre . Stephenson continued on to Galena after assisting in this task and did not accompany Dodge to Horseshoe Bend .

= = Political career = =

Stephenson was well @-@ connected , and received letters from prominent people , including Jefferson Davis in 1834 . That same year , Stephenson was elected to his first public office , the Illinois State Senate , after which he sought an appointment to the Land Office in Galena . From December 1834 until April 1835 Stephenson was absent from Galena . He spent time in St. Louis , where he married Ellen Kyle in December , then traveled on to Edwardsville and Vandalia , Illinois ; the couple eventually had two children . In April 1835 the couple returned to Galena where James took office as Register of Lands at Galena and Chicago , and they lived an elegant lifestyle .

In December 1837 , at the first " regularly constituted " Illinois state Democratic convention in Vandalia , James W. Stephenson was nominated as the party 's candidate for governor of Illinois . Within six months of his nomination , Stephenson was caught in a funds embezzling scandal , surrounding his time as Register of Lands , and forced to withdraw from the election . The Democrats reconvened their convention on June 6 , 1838 and nominated Thomas Carlin , a " most unexceptionable man " who had a reputation for being honest .

Older accounts of Stephenson 's withdrawal from the race give differing reasons for his departure . Former Democratic Illinois Governor Thomas Ford 's 1854 A History of Illinois stated that Stephenson 's reason for withdrawing from the election was " on account of sickness . " James Washington Sheahan wrote in his 1860 biography of Stephen A. Douglas that Stephenson 's early exit from the election was due to being " charged with being a defaulter . " John Moses ' 1 @ , @ 316 @-@ page work , Illinois , Historical and Statistical ( 1889 ) , characterized the accusations against Stephenson as " serious charges . "

= = Death = =

Less than a week after Carlin was elected governor of Illinois , Stephenson died of tuberculosis in August 1838 . He died at his home in Galena , at the age of 32 . He was buried the day of his death with military honors and left behind his wife , Ellen , and two children Lucy and Kyle .