

Wylie was first president at IU

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look into a list of charges he had prepared. He had also enlisted the help of a couple of trustees from Bloomington, Joshua Howe, a merchant, and Chester Ballard, a fellow physician.

According to IU historian Thomas Clark, the charges against Wylie included: that he had appointed IU founder David Maxwell's son to the faculty without trustee approval; that he had failed to read the university by-laws to the students in chapel; and with "duplicity and ungentlemanly conduct, and misrepresentation and falsehood."

At that trustees meeting in April of 1839 Foster finally had his "day in court." The "trial" of Andrew Wylie had all of the elements of a three-ring circus. Foster assumed the role of prosecutor and David Maxwell, a staunch supporter of Wylie, the defense counsel.

Historian Clark calls what transpired a "kangaroo court," which lasted five days. More than 20 witnesses were examined and cross-examined by Foster and Maxwell. In the end, the trustees voted unanimously including Howe and Ballard — for a resolution vindicating Wylie of all charges, including the misappropriation of funds. In fact, according to Theophilus Wylie, the president was thanked "for his faithful agency in the affair" (of buying books).

There are a couple of little ironic epilogues to the whole affair. Foster continued his controversial ways to the end of his life. When the Civil War was looming on America's horizon, Monroe Countians held a mass meeting in Bloomington to express their feelings. Foster's resolution to use force to keep the South in the Union, was rejected by the majority.

Perhaps the more ironic twist was that part of Foster's case against Wylie had been a matter of religious factionalism — Wylie, the Presbyterian, and Foster, the Methodist. What Foster may not have known was that prior to his acceptance of the presidency of Indiana Seminary Wylie had already had some misgivings about the confines of the Calvin point of View.

At that time the Presbyterian denomination was divided into two camps, the Old School and the New School, the latter being more liberal. IU historian James Woodburn says that when the Vincennes Synod of Indiana Presbyterians censured Presbyterian Wylie for preaching in a Unitarian Church, it was the last straw for him.

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