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## Jonathan Jennings

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Jonathan Jennings is not widely known although he was the first Governor of the state of Indiana, served as territorial delegate to Congress, and later as a member of the national House of Representatives. Coming to Indiana in 1807, when he was but twenty-three years old, he held high public office for more than twenty years.

The birthplace of Jennings is not definitely known but it was probably in Hunterdon County, New Jersey. The year was 1784.<sup>1</sup> That same year his father, who was a physician, became a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church. Jonathan's mother, the daughter of Samuel Kennedy, a Presbyterian minister at Basking Ridge, New Jersey, was well educated. Kennedy also practiced medicine. There were seven other children in the family besides Jonathan, five boys and two girls. While Jonathan was still a boy the family moved to Fayette County in western Pennsylvania where the father accepted a position as minister of the Dunlap's Creek Church. Mrs. Jennings died very shortly before the family moved to their new home.<sup>2</sup>

The family ties were very close and even though the different members became widely separated they did not lose touch with each other. The bond between Jonathan and his sister Ann, who was next to him in age, was an especially close one judging from the letters he wrote to her and her husband, David G. Mitchell.<sup>3</sup> A letter written in 1806 upon the occasion

<sup>1</sup> Logan Esarey, "Biographical Sketch" of Jennings, in *Messages and Papers of Jonathan Jennings, Ratliff Boon, William Hendricks (Governor's Messages and Letters, III, Indiana Historical Collections, XII, Indianapolis, 1924), 27*; Joy Julian Balley, "Jonathan Jennings: Indiana's First Governor" (Mss. in Indiana State Library), 3; William H. Jennings, *A Genealogical History of the Jennings Families in England and America* (Columbus, Ohio, 1899), II, 200.

<sup>2</sup> Jennings, *Genealogical History*, II, 185-187.

<sup>3</sup> Several of these are published in *Unedited Letters of Jonathan Jennings* (Indiana Historical Society, Publications, X, No. 4, Indianapolis, 1932).

of his sister's marriage is full of solicitation and hope that she may be happy, with some advice which he must have garnered from his observations of other married people since he was then unmarried himself. Being as applicable today as then it is worth quoting in part:

You as well as myself know that human nature is prone to err. . . . That the marriage state frees no one from the bonds of nature. . . . Thus have I known those who after marriage have lived years together, as happy as happy could be, afterward lived miserably all their lives. Let me offer this one thing to you as being the most able to affect it. . . . be sure the first [time] any coolness takes place, as there always does sooner or later between man and wife, remove the cause instantly and instead of having bad effects, it will tend rather to cement your affections.<sup>4</sup>

Jonathan's love for his elder brother Ebenezer is shown under quite different circumstances. Upon learning of the serious illness of his brother he wrote:

It brings afresh to memory the scenes, when he stood over my *expected* Death Bed, with an unremitted attention would to God that I could watch his declining days, his departing moments, and take his last assurance of the friendship of which his heart was so susceptible.

Tell him a long farewell; bid a long, a sad & last adieu for a Brother who holds him near his heart.<sup>5</sup>

Following his brother's death, Jonathan's regard for him was shown in a more material way. After a few years, he took his orphaned nephew, whose mother had also died, and brought him up in his own home and educated him.<sup>6</sup>

These close ties of kinship also extended to the stepmother. A short time after the death of his father we find him writing to his brother-in-law that "if an opportunity offers, it would oblige me if you would pay ten dollars to our step-mother. I had not money to leave her for the purpose of harvesting and I expect she will want before I can return."<sup>7</sup>

The father was very anxious that his sons should enjoy all the educational advantages possible. Jonathan attended elementary school at home and then the grammar school at Cannonsburg, Pennsylvania, where he received some instruction

<sup>4</sup> Jennings to David G. Mitchell, Steubenville, January 16, 1806, in *ibid.*, 158.

<sup>5</sup> Jennings to Mitchell, Jeffersonville, December 1, 1808, in *ibid.*, 165.

<sup>6</sup> Jennings, *Genealogical History*, II, 219.

<sup>7</sup> Jennings to Mitchell, Washington, June 19, 1818, in *Unedited Letters of Jennings*, 202.

in Latin and Greek, and in higher mathematics. Two of his classmates there were William Wick and William Hendricks,<sup>8</sup> both of whom later became prominent in Indiana. After attending grammar school, Jonathan probably studied law in Washington, Pennsylvania, in the office of John Simonson. In the early part of 1806 we find him in Steubenville where his brother Obadiah had established a law office. At the close of that year he writes of having been "down the Ohio almost all summer." It was probably then that he made his first visit to Indiana territory. The question of where to locate was then uppermost in his mind. He thought for a time that he might go to Virginia where another brother had located and was urging him to do likewise.<sup>9</sup> The lure of the West, however, was great enough to overbalance the advantages of living in a settled community, and by the spring of 1807, we find him located in Vincennes, which was then the capital and most important town in Indiana territory.

Jennings was admitted to the practice of law in Vincennes at the April term of court, 1807.<sup>10</sup> While waiting for business, he acted as clerk in the land office<sup>11</sup> and as an assistant clerk to the territorial Legislature.<sup>12</sup> His excellent penmanship no doubt aided him in securing these positions. Some of his observations on Vincennes are very interesting:

My prospects meet my expectations, but the place is full of rascals and &c. I have been very near fighting a duel with the Clerk of the General Court, but he thought proper to make concessions.

A few months later he writes:

God only knows when we shall meet again, as life is but a lottery, duelling and principles of honour are ever more regarded the farther you go to the Southard.

I worked my way so well, that, I was very near being Clerk to the House of Representatives of the Territory, and I believe I might have been elected, had I played a double part, but being under promise on certain conditions not to offer; I could not reconcile it to myself to offer, and thereby wound my promise.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Indiana Magazine of History*, XIX, 263.

<sup>9</sup> Jennings to Mitchell, Steubenville, August 18, 1806, in *Unedited Letters of Jennings*, 161.

<sup>10</sup> Territorial Court Record, April, 1807.

<sup>11</sup> Jacob P. Dunn, *Indiana: A Redemption from Slavery* (Boston and New York, 1905), 389; Jennings to Mitchell, Jeffersonville, December 1, 1808, in *Unedited Letters of Jennings*, 167.

<sup>12</sup> *Laws of Indiana Territory*, 1808, 41. He also worked six days copying parts of the revised code. *Ibid.*, 1807, 537.

<sup>13</sup> Jennings to Mitchell, Vincennes, June 27 and September 19, 1807, in *Unedited Letters of Jennings*, 162-63.

Regardless of having been so successful in working his way thus far he was not content. His adventuresome mind was continually conceiving new plans for gaining wealth. Within two or three months time we find him talking of launching a mercantile enterprise whereby he would furnish cotton material, whiskey, etc. to the merchants of Brownsville, Pennsylvania, and surrounding towns,<sup>14</sup> or again, in the event of war with England he was determined to risk all he could get together and run a contraband cargo to the neutral isles.<sup>15</sup> Another scheme that he had was a more natural one, and one well known in any new territory, that of speculating on the sale of public lands. He tried to interest the other members of his family in its possibilities so that they would advance him funds for the purpose, promising to pay them a certain per cent of all profits gained.<sup>16</sup> His activities along this line turned out disastrously, however. After purchasing land at the public sales, he became ill and unable to work during several months, and in order to raise money was forced to sell the land at a great discount.<sup>17</sup>

An institution known as Vincennes University had been organized in 1806. At a meeting held on August 17, 1807, Jennings was appointed clerk *pro tem* of the board of trustees to succeed General Washington Johnston who had resigned. At the same meeting, the resignation of Governor William Henry Harrison, who had been president of the board, was received. On August 29 Jennings was elected permanent clerk, and on September 12 Harrison was reelected a member of the board and also president. At the next meeting, held April 4, 1808, with Harrison in the chair, a committee was appointed to inquire into the conduct of Jennings as clerk of the board of trustees.<sup>18</sup>

Incidentally some light is thrown on Jennings' difficulties with the board by a group of anonymous communications that appeared in the *Western Sun* at this time. The first of these was in the form of a sarcastic "Dedication" of a pamphlet previously issued by General Washington Johnston and Luke Decker in which they had defended the election of Davis Floyd

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, June 27, 1807, 161-162.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, September 19, 1807, 162.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, December 1, 1808, 167.

<sup>18</sup> The information relative to the proceedings of the board of trustees is taken from a copy of the Minutes kindly sent the author by Howard R. Burnett, who is preparing a history of Vincennes University.

as clerk of the House of Representatives at the recent session of the Legislature. Jennings had certified the pamphlet and was criticized for so doing.<sup>19</sup>

The reply to this communication, written by "Sand and Rosin," probably Johnston and Decker, shows that differences had developed among the University trustees over a motion to curtail the use of the Commons by the French inhabitants.<sup>20</sup> It was opposed by Johnston and other members and was defeated. Although Johnston had apparently won his fight, he resigned and drew up a statement of the proceedings of the board upon the subject, which he got Jennings, as clerk *pro tem*, to certify. "Sand and Rosin" stated that there was a political persecution of Jennings in the April 4 meeting of the board of trustees and that a resolution was introduced and seconded by the anonymous author of the "Dedication" to expel Jennings for providing the certification for the pamphlet. There is no record of this resolution in the available minutes of the board. The action of the trustees was: "On Motion, Ordered, that a Committee be appointed to inquire into the conduct of J. Jennings as Clerk of the Board of Trustees, and report at meeting to be held on the last Saturday of June." There is no record in the preserved minutes of a meeting held on the designated date or of a report by this committee.

In the meeting of May 21, 1808, John D. Hay was appointed clerk *pro tem* of the board of trustees. Jennings' resignation as clerk was received and read, and Hay elected permanent clerk, at the meeting on November 21, 1808. By this time Jennings had removed to Clark County.

These incidents are of significance in view of the later hostility of Jennings to Harrison. Perhaps the later location of the state seminary at Bloomington instead of at Vincennes may have resulted from this animosity. But the records, in so far as they are available, disclose nothing definite about the relations of Harrison and Jennings on the board of trustees. The inquiry into the conduct of Jennings as clerk seems to be based on his action in certifying the pamphlet dealing with the proceedings of the board, but the information is so meager that no definite statement can be made.

<sup>19</sup> *Western Sun*, April 6, 1808.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, April 20, 1808. At a meeting held on August 16, 1807, the French inhabitants of Vincennes, having received information from Johnston of the proceedings of the trustees, passed resolutions asking the Legislature to repeal the existing laws respecting the Commons and pass others authorizing the French inhabitants to enclose and embank the lands. *Ibid.*, August 22, 1807.

During the latter part of 1808 Jennings left Vincennes and went to Clark County, first stopping in Jeffersonville and later making his permanent home near Charlestown. The reason given for this removal was that during the fall and winter of 1807 and 1808 he was sick and unable to attend to business of any kind.<sup>21</sup> In view of his later career, one is tempted to believe that after staying in Vincennes for a year and a half and sizing up the political situation, he saw that there was a better chance for himself in the eastern part of the territory. Also, he believed that the capital would be removed from Vincennes to Clark County within a year or two.<sup>22</sup> The story is told that in a conversation between Jennings and Nathaniel Ewing, his former chief in the land office, which probably took place on the occasion of a visit of Jennings to Vincennes in 1809, Ewing said, "Look us up a candidate for Congress", to which Jennings responded—"Why wouldn't I do?" After considering the matter, Ewing believed that Jennings might have a fair chance of success if he was acceptable to the voters of the eastern part of the territory.<sup>23</sup>

Here it will be well to get a brief glimpse of the political situation in Indiana in the spring of 1809. Congress had just passed a law separating Illinois territory from Indiana, and had also given the people the power to elect the delegate to Congress and the councillors who were to form the upper branch of the territorial Legislature. The division of the territory had a significant effect on the slavery question which was then most important. The Ordinance of 1787 contained the famous anti-slavery provision, but when Indiana territory was organized in 1800 the sentiment of the people was favorable toward the peculiar institution. Slaves were held in many parts of the territory, having been brought in by masters who emigrated here from slave-holding states. Between 1800 and 1805 several petitions were presented to Congress by the settlers asking for a repeal of the antislavery clause of the Ordinance, but Congress paid no heed to them. After 1805 the people turned to the territorial government for aid in bringing in slaves. The so-called "servant act" was passed which virtually legalized slavery in Indiana territory. With the removal of the Illinois group from the politics of Indiana

<sup>21</sup> Jennings to Mitchell, December 1, 1808, in *Unedited Letters of Jennings*, 187.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>23</sup> Dunn, *Indiana*, 390. Knowledge of the incident came to Mr. Dunn through the family of Isaac Naylor to whom Ewing related it.

territory, the large proslavery element was greatly diminished. This, together with the growth of settlements in the eastern part of Indiana which were largely composed of antislavery elements, brought the latter forces into the ascendancy for the first time. When Ewing asked Jennings to look up a candidate for Congress from the eastern part of the Territory, he meant an antislavery candidate.

Vincennes was the stronghold of the proslavery group as the majority of the slaves were in that vicinity. The candidates for Congress from that section were Thomas Randolph and John Johnson. Randolph, the friend of Governor Harrison, comprehended the importance of the rising antislavery feeling and tried to get away from his former proslavery position. If elected he promised not to attempt to introduce slavery unless instructed to do so by a decided majority of his constituents.<sup>24</sup> During the contest, Johnson was quiet on the slavery question,<sup>25</sup> but many of the proslavery group, disgusted with Randolph's conciliatory attitude toward the antislavery forces gave their support to Johnson.

After talking with Ewing, Jennings interviewed the political leaders in Clark and Dearborn counties. There was quite a proslavery element in the southern portion of Dearborn county, but in the northern part and in Clark County, there was a number of Quaker settlements. Here the antislavery advocates were strong and they were getting ready to put a candidate in the field. After some consultations Jennings was accepted as the antislavery candidate for Congress.

Several stories of his campaign methods as contrasted with those of Randolph have been handed down to us. During a log rolling on the farm of David Reese in Dearborn County, Randolph came riding up on horseback and was invited to stop. He dismounted and accepted the invitation to go to the house and wait for an opportunity to address the men at quitting time. The next day Jennings came by and upon receiving a similar invitation, replied, "Send a boy up with my horse, and I'll help roll." After the work was finished for the day, Jennings not only talked politics but entered into the sports of the occasion, always being careful to let the men defeat him.<sup>26</sup> And so he continued from house to house making friends

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<sup>24</sup> *Western Sun*, April 15, 1809.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, April 22, 1809.

<sup>26</sup> *Dunn, Indiana*, 395-396.

wherever he went. Even an opponent admitted that "wherever Jennings goes he draws all men to him."<sup>27</sup>

The result of the election was as follows: Jennings, 428 votes, Randolph, 402, and Johnson, 81. Jennings proceeded to Washington and was seated as a delegate to Congress from Indiana territory on November 27, 1809. Randolph also went to Washington to contest the election, alleging irregularity in regard to part of the returns from Dearborn County where Jennings had a majority, and proving that no election had been held in two precincts of that county. The committee to which the matter was referred reported back to the House that the election was illegal and that Jennings' seat ought to be vacated. Contrary to common procedure the House refused to accept the report and Jennings was permitted to remain.<sup>28</sup> He had fully expected that another election would be necessary so that the outcome gave him considerable satisfaction. Randolph was so certain of a decision adverse to his competitor that he had returned to Indiana and started campaigning.<sup>29</sup>

Jennings was reelected as territorial delegate in 1811, 1812, and 1814. In 1811 Randolph was again his opponent, but, in 1812 and 1814, Jennings defeated Waller Taylor and Judge Elijah Sparks, respectively. During the time that he served as a delegate, Jennings took no prominent part in the discussion of problems before the country, but tried to look after the interests of his constituents as best he could. A large part of his work pertained to relief for those who had bought land and were in danger of losing it because of inability to make payments under the well known credit system provided in the Land Act of 1800. On a resolution to prolong the time of payment for those who had purchased land before April, 1809, Jennings pointed out that the state of things had cut off from the people the means whereby they had calculated to make payments, and although the extension of payment was, in principle, objectionable, circumstances imperiously called for it. He also favored having each quarter-section of land divided and the price reduced, pointing out that more money would accrue under that system and that it would be paid with greater certainty.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> William Wesley Woollen, *Biographical and Historical Sketches of Early Indiana* (Indianapolis, 1888), 30.

<sup>28</sup> *Annals of Congress*, 11 Cong., 2 Sess., 682, 683, 844-848, 1172-1173, 1199.

<sup>29</sup> Jennings to Mitchell, Washington, January 16, 1810, in *Unedited Letters of Jennings*, 173-174.

<sup>30</sup> *Annals of Congress*, 12 Cong., 2 Sess., 150-151.



Jennings looked after the protection of the territory from Indian raids by securing the passage of a bill providing for the organization of four additional companies of Rangers. Provision was made for allowing the citizens of the territory to volunteer for this service, with the assurance that they would not be called upon to leave the territory thus exposing their own homes to Indian depredations. The Indiana delegate was active in looking after the many details connected with the pay of these Rangers as well as securing compensation for those who took part in the Battle of Tippecanoe and who had served after that to protect the territory.<sup>31</sup>

Jennings also presented several resolutions intended to diminish Harrison's appointive power, contending that the Governor had built up a party headed by his friends and devoted to his personal interests. Especially in the judicial department, where the Governor appointed the sheriff and that official in turn the jury, was there chance for corruption. To remedy this a bill was reported providing for the election of the sheriffs by the qualified voters and for an appeal from the territorial courts to those of the federal government.<sup>32</sup> His constituents instructed him to present a petition complaining of the arbitrary conduct of Governor Harrison in vetoing a bill for the removal of the capital from Vincennes.<sup>33</sup> Jennings believed that Harrison's policy of making small purchases of territory from the Indians in the eastern part of the territory and very large ones in the western part was followed in order to get a large population in that district and prevent the removal of the seat of government.<sup>34</sup>

The subject of roads was very important in any new territory. As a delegate to Congress, Jennings introduced resolutions looking toward the building of roads between Vincennes and Dayton, Ohio, between Jeffersonville and Detroit, and from a point on the northern boundary of the Greenville Treaty Line to North Bend, Ohio.<sup>35</sup>

Meanwhile, Jennings had increased his popularity among the people at home by his marriage to Ann Hay of Charles-

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 Cong., 1 Sess., 823; 12 Cong., 2 Sess., 144; 13 Cong., 2 Sess., 1502. See also *Unedited Letters of Jennings*, 186-187, 204-205, 208-209, and 211.

<sup>32</sup> *Annals of Congress*, 12 Cong., 1 Sess., 372, 420.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 846.

<sup>34</sup> Jennings to [Solomon Manwaring], March 6, 1812, in *Messages and Letters of William Henry Harrison*, edited by Logan Esarey (*Governors' Messages and Letters*, II, *Indiana Historical Collections*, IX, Indianapolis, 1922), 28.

<sup>35</sup> *Annals of Congress*, 11 Cong., 3 Sess., 487, 830; 12 Cong., 1 Sess., 348-349.

town, on August 8, 1811. She accompanied him to Washington during his second term in office, making the long trip on horseback. She often went with him on his campaign trips. When malaria was prevalent and many of the people fell ill she would go in the homes and do what she could for them.<sup>36</sup>

Jennings was evidently subject to periods of discouragement during which time he would give vent to such remarks as these:

I shall be happy soon to enjoy the ballance of my time in a retirement where neither poverty or riches, good or bad fame shall be able to disturb, improperly, my retreat.

A patriot. What a great yet empty name?! A Dives, How pleasing and yet how sub[t]le the idea & pursuit to equal!!!! An honest man. None more nobly good and none more really great. Except the Paul like christian.

To be happy in this world is far beyond my expectations, so much so that I scarcely wish it. To be contented is my greatest ambition.<sup>37</sup>

In December, 1815, Jennings presented a petition from the territorial Legislature asking that statehood be granted. The census taken that year had shown a population of over sixty-three thousand, which was more than the Ordinance of 1787 required. The bill as reported by Jennings early in January, 1816, designated the northern boundary of the proposed state to be a line running east and west through the extreme southern tip of Lake Michigan, while the final act passed by Congress designated a line running east and west through a point ten miles north of and parallel to one tangent of the extreme southern end of Lake Michigan. At just what stage of the passage this change was made or who was responsible for it is not definitely known, but Jennings no doubt aided in scouring this additional territory for Indiana.<sup>38</sup> The Enabling Act was finally passed on April 11, 1816, over three months after it had been introduced. It provided that an election of delegates to a constitutional convention should be held on May 13. Jennings was elected a delegate from Clark County and when the convention met he was chosen to preside over it. His experience in Congress was no doubt largely responsible for his receiving this honor. The delegates completed their work

<sup>36</sup> Mabel Morrison, *Ann Gilmore Hay* (n.p., 1925), 12, 14, 15-16.

<sup>37</sup> Jennings to Mitchell, Washington, May 31, 1813, in *Unedited Letters of Jennings*, 199.

<sup>38</sup> See Mrs. Frank J. Sheehan, *The Northern Boundary of Indiana* (Indiana Historical Society, *Publications*, VIII, No. 6, Indianapolis, 1928), 298-301, for a discussion of the subject.

in nineteen days and immediately afterwards writs were issued for the election of officers under the new government.

Jennings and Thomas Posey were the candidates for governor. The latter had served as territorial Governor since 1813, but was not especially popular. Ill health had made it necessary for him to live in Jeffersonville rather than in Corydon while governor and thus he lost some of the contacts that might have aided him in his candidacy for the governorship of the state. Jennings had the advantage over Posey because he had been before the public longer and was more of a politician. He continued his usual method of campaigning, joining in the work of the men he stopped to see. As the pioneers opposed electioneering, his activities had to be disguised as much as possible. When he dropped in at a meeting, militia muster, or log rolling, he was always "on his way" to some other place.<sup>39</sup> He was elected governor by a large majority.

Space will not permit more than a cursory glance at his activities while governor. His messages to the General Assembly were well written. His first one begins as follows:

The period has arrived which has devolved on you the important duty of giving the first impulse to the government of the state. The result of your deliberations will be considered as indicative of its future character as well as the future happiness and prosperity of its citizens. The reputation of the state, as well as its highest interest, will require that a just and generous policy toward the general government and a due regard to the rights of its members respectively, should invariably have their proper influence.<sup>40</sup>

Some of the measures set forth as advisable for the new government were: the establishment of a court procedure that would make the securing of justice swift and certain; the organization of an educational system extending from the common schools to a state university; the organization of a banking system; the prevention of unlawful attempts to seize and carry into slavery negroes legally entitled to their freedom; the organization of a state library; and the formulation of a plan of internal improvements.

The letters to his sister and brother-in-law are less frequent during this period. In one he made the comment

I hold an office, considered honourable, but I know it to be capable of yielding but little satisfaction.

<sup>39</sup> *Messages and Papers of Jennings, Boon and Hendricks*, 18.

<sup>40</sup> *House Journal*, 1816-17, 10.

How mysterious are the events of time under the guidance of an all wise beneficent providence. The great emperon of creation, man, expects much and realizes little in this life but anxiety, pain and fatigue.<sup>41</sup> In another letter he writes, "My situation is not very pleasant. I am too young for the situation I occupy. It excites too much jealousy."<sup>42</sup>

During the second year of his governorship Jennings was appointed a commissioner along with Lewis Cass and Benjamin Parke to negotiate a treaty with the Indians to effect the extinguishment of the Indian title to land in northern Indiana and elsewhere. He accepted the appointment and proceeded to St. Mary's, Ohio, where the treaty was to be made. Since the state constitution forbade any person holding office under the United States to exercise the duties of Governor, his enemies took advantage of the opportunity to claim that he had vacated his office by accepting the appointment. Christopher Harrison, the lieutenant governor, believing or hoping that the office had been vacated, began to exercise the duties of Governor. Meanwhile, Jennings refused to accept this view of the situation, and upon his return to Corydon claimed the office. In defense of his action he said: "I acted from an entire conviction of its propriety, and an anxious desire on my part to promote the welfare and accomplish the wishes of the whole people of the state in assisting to add a large and fertile tract of country to that which we already possess."<sup>43</sup> After considerable discussion in the Legislature, that body refused to institute impeachment proceedings against Governor Jennings. He must have felt fully vindicated the next year when the people reelected him as governor by a large majority over his opponent Christopher Harrison.

During his second administration, the state banking system which had been organized proved unsound. The revenue of the state proved to be deficient and a loan was secured from the State Bank at Vincennes. In order to meet the payment of the loan the Legislature passed an act authorizing the reception of the paper of the State Bank and its branches for taxes. In the meantime, the Bank transferred the state obligations to the United States in payment of a debt due the government and suspended redemption of her notes, thus leaving

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<sup>41</sup> Jennings to Mitchell, Corydon, March 17, 1817, in *Unedited Letters of Jennings*, 218-219.

<sup>42</sup> Jennings to Mitchell, Corydon, May 28, 1818, in *ibid.*, 228. He was then 34.

<sup>43</sup> *Messages and Papers of Jennings, Boon and Hendricks*, 61.

the state treasury full of depreciated, worthless money. An issue of state treasury notes was resorted to but these also depreciated. Jennings was severely criticized for his failure to supervise the Bank and his refusal to instigate an investigation earlier. Other states were having similar experiences at the same time due to the panic of 1819. The blame must be placed more on the general ignorance of economic laws and the dishonesty of some of the men in charge of the Bank rather than on the conduct of the governor. He suffered from the effects as well as others. His salary of \$1,000 in sound currency amounted to only \$600 in the depreciated currency. His expenses incurred while in office were more than double his salary and involved him in debts from which he was never able to recover.<sup>44</sup>

The constitution provided that the governor should not serve more than two terms. Shortly before his second term was to expire, Jennings resigned to become a candidate for representative in Congress in place of William Hendricks, who, in turn, became a candidate for Governor. Jennings' enemies had handbills printed bearing a list of charges in regard to his conduct but he was able to refute these in a satisfactory manner and win the election.<sup>45</sup> He continued to be reelected to this office from the second congressional district until 1830. Twice he was a candidate for the United States Senate but was both times defeated.<sup>46</sup>

During this period in Congress the problem of internal improvements was much discussed. In 1819 Congress appropriated \$250,000 to complete the Cumberland or National Road, now known as U.S. Road 40, to Wheeling, and pledged the two per cent land sales fund of Indiana and Illinois to return the amount to the United States Treasury. During the session of 1824-25, a bill was introduced providing for another large appropriation to continue the road to Zanesville, Ohio. During the course of the debate on the subject Jennings spoke many times. He did not consider it fair to the states of Indiana and Illinois that the two per cent derived from the sale of public lands in those states should be pledged to pay for a road that might never reach that far west. He introduced an amendment to the effect that before any further pledges were

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<sup>44</sup> John H. B. Nowland, *Sketches of Prominent Citizens of 1876*, (Indianapolis, 1877), 59-60.

<sup>45</sup> See *Unedited Letters of Jennings*, 236-246.

<sup>46</sup> *Indiana Magazine of History*, XXIII, 383.

made provision should be made to locate and survey the road westward to the Mississippi, so that the states of Indiana and Illinois would have some assurance that the road would ultimately benefit them. The amendment came to a vote on January 17, 1825, and was rejected. The following day, however, it was reconsidered and adopted by a large majority.<sup>47</sup>

Another internal improvement project furthered by Jennings was the Wabash and Erie Canal. He was able to get a bill passed reserving from sale a portion of the public lands through which the canal would be built and granting a part of such lands for the cost of construction of the canal. In one of his speeches made during the progress of the bill, Jennings adverted to the opinion of Washington in favor of this and other western water communications.<sup>48</sup> He also aided in securing an appropriation to survey the obstructions in the Wabash River looking toward their ultimate removal so that this important route of travel might be open to steam boats all the year round.<sup>49</sup>

In 1825, when the election of president was thrown into the House of Representatives, Jennings voted for Jackson although personally, according to one author, he favored Adams.<sup>50</sup> Previous to the balloting he wrote home asking that the votes for President in each and every county in Indiana be forwarded to him.<sup>51</sup> Both the popular and elector vote of the state was for Jackson, and it is probable that Jennings used this information to determine what his vote should be. As a member of Congress, he voted with Jackson's followers for the most part. At home, however, he was not considered a strong enough Jackson man to be elected to the United States Senate.<sup>52</sup>

On several occasions Jennings expressed his disapproval of the methods being used in the passage of bills. One instance concerned the investigation of land surveyors' expenses. Jennings asserted that since most of those favoring the bill were doing so because they wanted the conduct of a certain surveyor-general investigated, they ought to get directly at their

<sup>47</sup> *Annals of Congress*, 18 Cong., 2 Sess., 195-204-206, 240-241, 246, 261.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 Cong., 1 Sess., 2601, 3252-3253.

<sup>49</sup> A report prepared by Jennings and the other members of Congress from Indiana and Illinois on the subject is given in *Unedited Letters of Jennings*, 265-267.

<sup>50</sup> Adam Leonard, "Personal Politics in Indiana, 1816-1840," in *Indiana Magazine of History*, XIX, 35.

<sup>51</sup> Jennings to Mitchell, Funks Town, Md., December 1, 1824, in *Unedited Letters of Jennings*, 253.

<sup>52</sup> Jennings to John Tipton, Charlestown, July 25, 1829, in *ibid.*, 271.

object instead of providing for an investigation of all surveyors-general thus creating an added expense for the government.<sup>53</sup>

On a question of appropriating money for a board of visitors for West Point Academy, he said he had no desire to withhold public money from such uses as would really give the public an interest in the character of this institution, but in the past some had been appointed to this duty who could not even demonstrate a proposition in Euclid. The appointment of men ignorant of military tactics made the whole matter a farce.<sup>54</sup>

During the time Jennings was in Congress, his friends at home conferred one more honor upon him. On October 7, 1823, he was elected *Grand Master* of the Masonic Lodge. He was not installed until the annual meeting in 1824 when he was re-elected for another year. He declined reelection in 1825.<sup>55</sup>

Jennings who had become addicted to the use of liquor while in public life, was defeated for Congress in 1830 by John Carr. The drinking habit which, although then common and not considered derogatory to a man's character, had affected the health of Jennings to a degree that could not be overlooked. His friends felt that only retirement to private life would save him from an early death and they gave their support to his opponents, there being four other candidates. His habits had become too firmly fixed, however, for him to discontinue them and his last years were saddened by over indulgence in strong drink.

In April, 1826, his wife died.<sup>56</sup> She had suffered from ill health for several years. Six months later Jennings married Clarissa Barbee who had come from Kentucky to teach in the seminary at Charlestown. He spent the last years of his life on his farm near Charlestown. His home was built of hewn logs, was a story and a half high, and had a long porch at the front. Many visitors and friends came to see him, and always his genial personality made him a very agreeable host. He was called from this retirement to perform one more public service, that of commissioner to treat with the Potawattomi and Miami Indians in 1832. The story is told by a witness that the Indians objected to treating with the other commissioners, Mark Crume and John W. Davis, but turning to Jen-

<sup>53</sup> *Annals of Congress*, 17 Cong., 2 Sess., 641.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 Cong., 1 Sess., 1524.

<sup>55</sup> Daniel McDonald, *A History of Freemasonry in Indiana* (Indianapolis, 1898), 332.

<sup>56</sup> *Morrison Ann Gilmore Hay*, 24.

nings the chief said, "Good man, and know how to treat us."<sup>57</sup> As in all his relations with men his sense of justice made the Indians trust him.

He maintained an active interest in public affairs to the end of his life. Concerning the location of a state road proposed by the legislature during the session of 1831-32, he wrote outlining a tentative route which would comport with the best interests of the counties concerned. His desire to see legislation carried on more efficiently in state as well as in national government is well illustrated by his statement made at this time, that "a State that affords *not*, charts of its o[w]n geograph[y] must legislate '*as through a glass darkly.*'"<sup>58</sup>

Although Jennings was brought up under Christian influences and two of his brothers entered the ministry, he seems to have made no church connections in Indiana. However, it seems probable that this was due more to neglect than to any hostility to the church and its teachings. In his letters we find several references to religion which support this supposition. In one he set forth his thoughts relative to the matter:

I have often wished and sometimes determined to become a christian or at least to try. Perplexities on the onset assail & I have as often forgot my wishes and the past determination. I have often thought that when I shall gain my retirement I shall then be more able at least to fulfill my intentions. But poor human nature, prone to err, and too often forgetful of its duty to God and itself, follows the reflected rainbow to the loss of its substantial good.<sup>59</sup>

Fourteen years later, upon the death of his sister Ann, he wrote:

I expect she is now happy. . . . Indeed I have no doubt of it. I deeply condole with you and sincerely agree with you that religion is no chimera, and wish I were a subject of its influence. I still hope to be.<sup>60</sup>

Financial troubles beset him during these last years and it was only through the efforts of several of his friends that he was allowed to remain on his farm until his death which occurred on July 26, 1834. He is buried at Charlestown.

Jennings has been judged quite differently by different historians. Jacob P. Dunn, writing in 1905, upholds him as the apostle of freedom, without whom Indiana might have become a slaveholding state. He describes him as "a young

<sup>57</sup> Nowland, *Prominent Citizens of 1876*, 56.

<sup>58</sup> Jennings to [?], January 4, 1832, in *Unedited Letters of Jennings*, 273-274.

<sup>59</sup> Jennings to Mitchell, Washington, May 31, 1813, in *ibid.*, 199.

<sup>60</sup> Jennings to Mitchell, Washington, December 28, 1827, in *ibid.*, 264.



Hercules, stripped for the fray, wielding the mighty bludgeon of 'No slavery in Indiana.'"<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, Dr. Logan Esarey estimates him in the following words:

As a politician Jennings possessed remarkable ability. . . . As a statesman he was of modest worth. He doubtless served to the extent of his capacity but that was not great. In the important questions that arose during his time he took no decisive stand. The new state which he helped to organize shows little evidence of his craftsmanship. His name is connected with no great measure or institution that has come down to us. He forfeited the good will of his neighbors by his intemperance and insolvency.<sup>62</sup>

Perhaps the truth lies somewhere between these two extremes. Jennings was no doubt sincere in his desire to make Indiana a free state, but the antislavery forces were already in the ascendancy by the time he was in a position to exert much influence. The territorial Legislature of 1810 repealed the slave law that was on the statute books and from then on the proslavery group fought a losing battle. Jennings saw the opportunity of championing the antislavery, capital-moving, and anti-Harrison forces and by so doing he received his first political offices. His pleasing personality which won him many friends, together with his assiduous care in looking after the interests of those whom he represented were probably the leading factors in keeping him in political office for twenty-one years.

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<sup>61</sup> Dunn, *Indiana*, 389.

<sup>62</sup> Esarey, "Biographical Sketch," in *Messages and Letters of Jennings, Boon and Hendricks*, 28.