

TERCENTENARY HISTORY
OF
MARYLAND

EMBODYING
BIOGRAPHICAL RECORDS OF COLONISTS, PIONEERS, JUDGES,
GOVERNORS, MILITARY OFFICERS, ETC.

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commissioner of patents. This office he accepted, but resigned it on December 10th of the same year, to succeed Howell Cobb as secretary of the treasury. He resigned the treasury portfolio one month later and was succeeded by John A. Dix of New York.

Mr. Thomas retired to his home in Talbot county and resumed the practice of law. His sympathies were with the south during the war and his son served in the Confederate army. In 1867 the democratic-conservative party secured control of the Maryland legislature and elected Mr. Thomas United States senator. On the ground that he had supplied his son, who was a Confederate soldier, with clothing, the senate refused by a vote of twenty-seven to twenty to admit him to his seat. The impeachment trial of President Johnson was approaching and the vote of a democratic senator from Maryland was badly needed. Mr. Thomas had always entertained an ambition to be a senator and the legislature was inclined to reelect him, but in view of the situation in Washington, he himself urged the immediate election of someone against the admission of whom no excuse could be found. On March 6, 1868, George Vickers was chosen, and was sworn as a senator in time to vote against the impeachment of the president. As the lack of a single democratic vote would have changed the verdict of acquittal Mr. Thomas' sacrifice may be said to have averted the dangerous precedent of deposing a president when the opposition party happened to secure a two-thirds voting strength in the senate.

In 1874 Mr. Thomas was elected to the lower house of congress. He served one term, and was then chosen to represent Talbot county in the legislature, where he announced himself a candidate for United States senator, but was defeated in the democratic caucus by Governor Groome. In 1883 he was again elected a member of the legislature and made a final attempt to secure a seat in the United States senate, but suffered another disappointment, Judge Ephraim K. Wilson being chosen after protracted balloting. He survived this defeat about six years, dying October 2, 1890.

THOMAS GEORGE PRATT.
(1804-1869.)

Thomas George Pratt, thirtieth governor of the state of Maryland, occupies a distinguished place in the succession of executives of the state because of his honorable connection with struggle to prevent the tax-burdened commonwealth from blotting its fair shield with the stain of repudiating its debt. He was born in Georgetown, D. C., February 18, 1804, being descended from a family which, through several generations, had been prominent in Prince George's county, Maryland. He was educated at Georgetown and Princeton Colleges, studied law and began the practice of his profession in Upper Marlboro, Maryland. He served in the state legislature from 1832 to 1835, and in 1836 was a member of the state senatorial electoral college at the time of the revolt of nineteen of its democratic members against continuance of an inequitable system of representation. In the same year he was appointed president of the executive council. In the campaign of 1836 he was a presidential electoral candidate, and from 1838 to 1843 was a member of the state senate.

Payment of the state debt became the paramount issue in the gubernatorial campaign of 1844. Mr. Pratt was the nominee of the whig party, and in his canvass, boldly advocated meeting the state's obligations fully and fairly, despite the fact that there was a large element in the electorate which contended that the burden was beyond the capacity of the state to carry. He was elected with a majority of five hundred and forty-eight votes. He assumed the governorship January 3, 1845, and turned his energies to effecting the resumption of the payment of interest on the debt. Toward the close of his administration he had the satisfaction of seeing his cherished purpose accomplished.

The War with Mexico imposed upon Governor Pratt many additional calls for the expenditure of his energies. He was indefatigable in supporting the Federal government's war measures and the state under his guidance was able to offer more men to the army than the nation could accept from it.

The bitter feeling created in the north by the passage of the fugitive slave law involved Governor Pratt in acrimonious disputes with the authorities of the state of Pennsylvania. That state attempted practically to nullify the law and refused to honor the Maryland executive's demands for the return of negroes who had fled

across the border. In the case of a negro who had attempted to kill his master in Maryland, the culprit was ordered to be delivered up to the Maryland officers, but another court issued a writ of habeas corpus, and a mob rescued the negro.

At the expiration of his term as governor Mr. Pratt engaged in the practice of law at Annapolis, but in March, 1849, he was named as United States senator to fill the unexpired term of Reverdy Johnson, who had resigned his seat to accept the post of attorney-general of the United States. In 1851 he was reelected senator for a full term of six years.

After the collapse of the whig party Mr. Pratt united with the democratic party. In 1861 his sympathies were with the southern Confederacy. He was arrested by the Federal authorities and confined in Fortress Monroe for several weeks. His son served in the Confederate army.

In 1864 Mr. Pratt removed from Annapolis to Baltimore, and was a delegate to the democratic convention which nominated General McClellan for president. He was a candidate before the Maryland legislature for United States senator in 1867 but was defeated by William T. Hamilton. He died at his home in Baltimore, November 9, 1869.

WILLIAM GRASON.
(1786-1868.)

William Grason, twenty-eighth governor of the state of Maryland, was born in Queen Anne's county, Maryland, in 1786, the son of Richard Grason, a prosperous farmer. After attending schools in his native county he was sent to St. John's College in Annapolis. Even before the establishment of the United States Naval Academy, Annapolis was frequently visited by vessels of war, and probably owing to this fact, William Grason imbibed an ambition to enter the navy. He secured an appointment as midshipman after completing his college course, but remained in the navy only a short time.

In 1812 he married a daughter of James Bennett Sullivane and engaged in rural pursuits in Dorchester county near the home of his bride's family. A few years later he removed to his native county, where he varied the cultivation of the soil with an active participation in politics. His affiliations at the start of his career were with the federalist party and like most of the federalists, he opposed the War with England in 1812. Sympathy with the policies of Andrew Jackson, however, caused him to become an ardent democrat and as such he was elected to the legislature in 1828 and was reelected in the following year. In 1835 he was a democratic nominee for congress but was defeated by James Alfred Pearce, the whig candidate.

In 1837 he was again elected to the legislature and took an active part in the movement to amend the constitution of the state so as to provide for the election of the governor by direct vote of the people. In 1838 he was nominated by the democratic party for governor and was elected by a narrow majority of three hundred and eleven votes at the close of a campaign of intense bitterness. The legislature elected at the same time was controlled by the whig party, and Governor Grason's administration was marked by friction between the executive and law-making branches of the government.

The heavy debt incurred by the state, and the unwillingness of the people to submit to taxation for its discharge, had created a serious financial situation when Governor Grason became head of the state government. He took a firm stand against repudiation of any portion of the debt, inveighed bitterly against the "wild spirit for internal improvements" which had created a burden of fifteen million dollars indebtedness, and advocated a plan of moderate taxation to meet the state's obligations. He charged the whig party with responsibility for the situation and exposed the futility of expecting benefit from the state's interest in the public lands. The whig legislature was little inclined to heed the tactless admonitions of the Governor, and nothing was done during his term of office toward solving the debt problem.

Governor Grason was at war also with the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad officials on account of their wholesale hypothecation of the bonds of the state, and with the Chesapeake and Ohio canal management which, he charged, was using the canal to promote the political interests of the president of the company.

At the close of his gubernatorial term Mr. Grason returned to his farm. In