

## Matthew Lyon



Matthew Lyon, "the Hampden of Congress," was born in County Wicklow, Ireland, July 14, 1750. He emigrated to America when he was fifteen years old, and settled in Woodbury, Connecticut, as an apprentice of Jabez Bacon, the wealthiest merchant in all New England. Lyon left Connecticut, in 1774, and removed to Vermont, where he became one of the famous Green Mountain Boys of the Revolution.

He was a member of the Vermont legislature for four years; and in 1783 he founded the town of Fair Haven, Vermont. Lyon became one of the great men of Vermont, a disciple of Thomas Jefferson, "the pioneer Democrat of

New England."

In 1796 he was elected to Congress and he went to Philadelphia in May, 1797, to enter upon his duties. He at once became one of the powerful men in that body. Lyon had published a newspaper at Fair Haven for several years, besides issuing a number of books from his press, but during the years of 1798 and 1799 he edited the now famous Scourge of Aristocracy, a semi-monthly magazine.

At the present day this is a rare volume, and much to be desired. In 1801 Lyon cast his vote in Vermont for Thomas Jefferson against Aaron Burr for the presidency, and this vote is said to have made certain the election of Jefferson. Late in this year of 1801 Lyon left Vermont for Kentucky, and he later became the founder of Eddyville, Lyon county, Kentucky. The county, however, was named in honor of his son, Chittenden Lyon.

In 1802 Matthew Lyon was a member of the Kentucky legislature; and from 1803 to 1811 he was in the lower House of Congress from his Kentucky district. His opposition to the War of 1812 retired him to private life. At Eddyville he was engaged in shipbuilding, in which he had great success, but after his defeat for re-election to Congress, in 1812, disasters came fast upon him, and he was reduced from affluence to comparative poverty.

At the age of sixty-eight years, however, he recovered himself, paid all his debts, and died in easy circumstances. In 1820 Lyon was appointed United States Factor to the Cherokee Indians of Arkansas territory, and he set out for his future home at Spadra Bluff, Arkansas. He was later elected as the second delegate to Congress from Arkansas, but he did not live to take his seat, dying at Spadra Bluff, August 1, 1822.

Eleven years later his remains were returned to Kentucky, and re-interred at Eddyville, where a proper monument marks the spot to-day. Matthew Lyon's reply to John Randolph of Roanoke, in 1804, in regard to the old question of the Yazoo frauds, is his only extant speech that is at all

remembered at the present time.

Source: Bibliography. The History of Kentucky, by R. H. Collins (Covington, Kentucky, 1882); Matthew Lyon, by J. F. McLaughlin (New York, 1900).