

Augustus Octavius Bacon.

AUGUSTUS OCTAVIUS BACON, lawyer, legislator, United States Senator, is the second son of Reverend Augustus O. Bacon, a Baptist clergyman, a native of Liberty county, Georgia, himself the third son of Thomas Bacon, of that county. His ancestors upon one side were a colony of Puritans who settled in Dorchester, Massachusetts, in 1630, and who removed to Georgia and founded the Midway settlement in 1753. His great-great-grandfather, Samuel Bacon, and Richard Baker arrived in that year, and were the advance guard and the first of the Midway Colony, afterwards the community of Liberty county. Upon this stock was engrafted a Virginia branch springing from the Holcombes of Cavalier ancestry. www.georgiapioneers.com Augustus O. Bacon was born in Bryan county, Georgia, October 20, 1839, although his mother's home at the time was in Liberty county, where he was reared from his infancy. Her maiden name was Mary Louisa Jones, and she was her father's only child. Through her he is a grandson of Samuel Jones, of Liberty county, (himself the only son of Samuel Jones, an officer in the Revolutionary Army), and a grandnephew, through his maternal grandmother, of Judge William Law, of Savannah, Georgia, one of the most distinguished jurists of his time in the South. His parents were residents of Liberty county, and here and in Troup county he spent his childhood and boyhood in a typical Georgian environment, chiefly marked by the fact of his early bereavement through the untimely death of both parents, his father having died July 3rd, 1839, at the early age of twenty-three, before the birth of the son, and his mother at twenty years of age,



Very truly yours
A. O. Bacon

before he was a year old; while his only brother died within a week after the death of his mother. The father and mother and brother are buried in the old cemetery of historic Midway Church in Liberty county. His paternal grandmother, by whom he was adopted when thus doubly orphaned, was a daughter of the Rev. Henry Holcombe, D.D., a native of Virginia, and a Captain in the Colonial Army of the Revolutionary War, and thereafter a resident of Savannah. Under her fostering and devoted guardianship he received careful training and a good elementary education, and, at the age of sixteen, he entered the University of Georgia, at Athens. He was graduated from the collegiate department of that institution in 1859, and immediately thereafter entered the law school and as a member of the first law class ever graduated by the University, received a degree therefrom in the following year.

He selected Atlanta as the place in which to begin his professional career; but scarcely six months elapsed before he joined the Confederate forces as Adjutant of the Ninth Georgia regiment, with which he served in Virginia during the campaigns of 1861 and 1862. Subsequently he was commissioned as Captain in the provisional army of the Confederate States and assigned to general staff duty, serving at different times upon the staff of Gen. Henry R. Jackson, Gen. Alfred Iverson, and General Mackall. He was mustered out of service at the close of hostilities with the rank of Captain. Returning to the law after having for a year reviewed his legal studies, he for the first time began practice at Macon in 1866, from which date he has been actively identified with the bar of Georgia. His success in his profession was immediate, and he quickly assumed a ranking place as a trial lawyer in both the State and Federal courts. He possessed oratorical talents of a high order, as well as legal learning; and these soon led him into the political arena of his State, gave

him growing influence, and marked him as one of the coming men.

In 1868, when twenty-eight years of age, Mr. Bacon was nominated by the State Democratic Convention for presidential elector from the then fourth congressional district. Two years from that time he was elected from Bibb county to the Georgia House of Representatives, and was returned to that body, at each successive election, for twelve years, and was subsequently again elected for a term of two years. During this period, he was speaker pro tempore for two years, and speaker for eight years, an unusual parliamentary experience, especially in the fact that no other Georgian has ever been speaker for so long a time. He served in this position of honor with distinction and dignity, and displayed an executive ability, skill as a parliamentarian and a knowledge of legislative procedure that subsequently gave him immediate prestige when he entered the United States Senate. Several times, in the face of the most powerful adverse political influences, he was brought forward as a candidate for the governorship of his State, and in the State Democratic Convention in 1883 he lacked but one vote for a nomination, when the nomination was equivalent to an election. This was one of the famous convention contests of Georgia, in which there was a three days deadlock before a nomination was made.

Mr. Bacon was frequently a member of the State Democratic conventions, was president of the convention in 1880, and was delegate from the State at large to the National Democratic Convention at Chicago in 1884. Although his party was not without sharp rivalries, he was always considered a stalwart, aggressive leader, and, in 1894, after an exciting and remarkable campaign before the people in which there were four active and influential candidates, he was elected by the Georgia Legislature to a seat in the United States Senate. In 1900, after an endorse-

ment in the State Democratic primary, he was unanimously re-elected to a second term in the Senate by a legislature in which there were Democratic, Republican and Populist members. In 1906, after another endorsement in the State Democratic primary, in which he had no opposition, he was at the succeeding session of the Legislature again unanimously re-elected to a third term in the Senate. In this election he has the marked distinction of being the first Georgian who, since the foundation of the Government, has been elected from the State to a consecutive and uninterrupted full third term in the Senate.

In the Senate, Mr. Bacon has steadily grown in influence. He is a member of both the Judiciary and Foreign Relations committees, and the ranking Democratic Senator on each of them. He is easily entitled to rank among the leaders of the minority, and as a graceful, fluent speaker, and ready debater, he is hardly excelled by any one of its members. His speeches are characterized by richness of diction, and by good literary form, and strength of argument. One of his most notable efforts was in opposition to the acquisition of the Philippines. During the contest over the question he made several extended speeches, some of which now read like prophecy. He was at that time the author of the Bacon resolution "declaring the purpose of the United States not permanently to retain the islands but to give the people thereof their liberty." The vote on this resolution was a tie in the Senate and it was defeated by the casting vote of the Vice-President—the only occasion in many years when there has been a tie vote in the Senate upon any question, and upon which a Vice-President has voted. Mr. Bacon has made in the Senate, in addition to others, a number of speeches on constitutional questions which have attracted marked attention. Among them are those on the power of the President to recognize the independence of a revolting province of a foreign nation; the power

of Congress by joint resolution and without a treaty to acquire foreign territory as in the case of Hawaii; the authority of the Senate to require upon its order the production of any and all papers in any of the executive departments; the power of Congress to exercise extra-constitutional power in the Philippines; the constitutionality of a bill to charter an international bank; the constitutional powers of the President and the Senate respectively in the negotiation and making of treaties; and the constitutionality of the bill entitled, "A Bill to protect the President of the United States." The design of this last proposed law was to provide a different and greater penalty for an act of violence against the President and certain other specified officials, than for the same act of violence when committed against any other citizen. This bill Mr. Bacon resisted to the uttermost, contending that "there should not be one law for one man, even though he be President of the United States, and a different law for another man, even though he be the lowliest citizen of the Republic. He fought it through two Congresses in the face of the most strenuous advocacy by Senator Hoar and other Senators, and finally defeated it. Many other speeches could be specified, but it is sufficient to say that he has taken an active part in every debate upon all important questions discussed in the Senate since 1894. Referring to one of these debates which occurred in February, 1906, the following comment was made editorially by the Hartford (Conn.) Courant:

"Take down an old volume of the *Congressional Globe* and read one of the debates on foreign affairs in which Lewis Cass and John M. Clayton were pitted against each other—for instance, the debate (famous in its time) on the merits of the Clayton-Bulwer treaty. Then take Monday's *Congressional Record* and read the report therein of the debate between Mr. Bacon of Georgia and Mr. Spooner of Wisconsin on the constitutional powers of the President and Senate in treaty making. It would be scant praise to say that the Bacon-Spooner debate is the more readable of the two. For intellectual vigor, grip of the matter in hand, compactness and lucidity in

statement, brisk alertness in the give and take of dialectic fence, and last but not least, good English, the Bacon-Spooner debate is the abler of the two. Daniel Webster would have listened to every word of it attentively, with keen interest and pleasure; Calhoun and Clay also."

Senator Bacon was married in 1864 to Miss Virginia Lamar, of Macon, Georgia. He is a Regent of the Smithsonian Institution, and is also, as he has been for many years, a Trustee of the University of Georgia.

W. J. NORTON.