

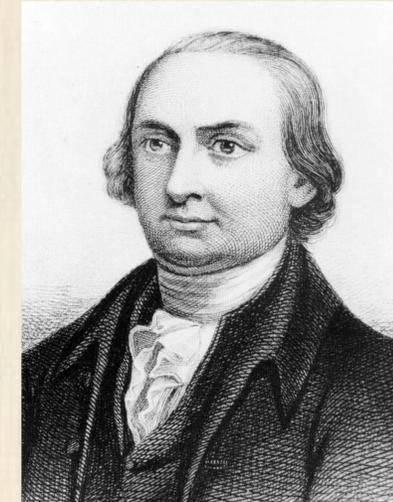


William Pope Duval: The Absent Governor

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William Pope Duval



George Walton

THE SECRETARY OF STATE TO GOVERNOR DUVAL

[NA:SD, Dom. Letters, xx]

Department of State WASHINGTON 5 Nov. 1822
WM P. DUVAL Esquire, Governor of Florida, and in his absence
to GEORGE WALTON Esquire Secretary of the said Territory—
Pensacola.

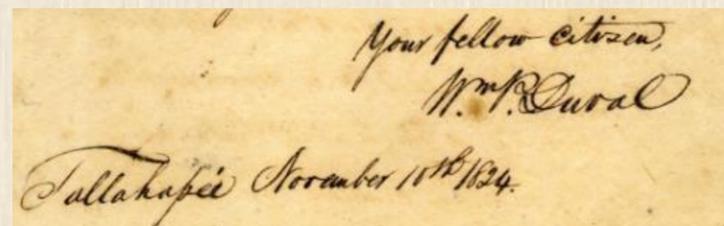
SIR. Your letter of the 22^d of September last having been laid before the President of the United States,³⁰ I am directed by him in conformity to the suggestion therein made, to authorize you, as I hereby do, to draw upon this Department for a sum not exceeding five thousand dollars, for the payment of the claims enumerated in your Letter, the examination of which so far as they be just and lawful claims upon the Government of the United States, is also entrusted to you. It is the special instruction of the President, that in the discharge of this trust, no claim be admitted not authorized by Law, and he relies that in the adjustment of every claim you will have the strictest regard to the justice due to the public as well as to the Claimants. You will regularly transmit to this Department an account of all the sums paid by virtue of this authority, supported by authentic vouchers, for the purpose of settlement at the Treasury. I am with great respect, Sir, your very humble and obedient Servant.

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS

This letter details the fact that there was an absence in the governor position. This led to the acting governor being the sole leader of Florida for the time, making decisions about the yellow fever plague and Native American affairs.

Methods:

1. Literature Review: Start by conducting a comprehensive review of existing literature on William Duval's time as governor. This can include historical books, articles, and online resources to gain a better understanding of the context and events surrounding his tenure.
2. Archival Research: Access historical archives, such as government records and personal papers, to gather primary source materials related to William Duval's governorship. This may include letters, speeches, and official documents that provide insights into his policies and actions.



This is an image of William P. Duval's signature

Abstract:

This research project explores the governance of William Pope Duval, the longest-serving governor of the Florida Territory in the early 19th century. Duval, appointed by President James Monroe in 1822, faced many challenges during his tenure (1822-1834) including conflicts with the Seminole tribe, disputes over Spanish land grants, and issues with territorial boundaries. Despite these obstacles, Duval was able to establish a stable government and promote economic growth in the territory. The research examines Duval's policies and decisions, as well as his relationships with other political figures of the time, to gain a deeper understanding of his leadership and impact on the development of Florida. This project will also further delve into how Florida was managed while Duval was absent from his position. Letters between important politicians and official documents will be analyzed in order to construct an image of Florida's second governor. The sources gathered to assemble the information in the project were found through the use of multiple digital archives, collaboration with historical foundations located in Tallahassee, and references to books that cover surrounding topics. Due to the 200-year anniversary of Tallahassee's founding occurring in 2024, this history is more important than ever.

Background:

William Pope Duval was born in Virginia and received his education at the College of William and Mary. He then studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1804. He moved to Kentucky, where he became involved in politics and was elected to the Kentucky House of Representatives in 1809. In 1812, he was elected to the United States House of Representatives, where he served for six years. After his appointment as governor of Florida, Duval faced numerous challenges, including conflicts with the Seminole tribes, who had previously inhabited the region. He worked to establish treaties with the Seminole, but tensions continued to mount. Duval also faced challenges related to the territory's legal system, which was not well established then. Despite these challenges, Duval made significant contributions to the development of Florida. He oversaw the expansion of the court system in the territory, as well as the construction of roads and other infrastructure. Duval's service as governor exhibited a major flaw. He found himself away from the state for extended periods of time on multiple occasions. This occurred because Duval wanted to spend more time with his family, who lived in Kentucky for much of his tenure as governor. During these absences, Secretary George Walton served (under protest) as the acting governor of Florida Territory.

Results:

In conclusion, William Pope Duval's era of governance in Florida was a crucial time in the state's history. During his tenure as governor, from 1822 to 1834, Duval faced numerous challenges, including the implementation of a new territorial government, managing relations with Native American tribes, and navigating the tensions between different groups of settlers. Despite these challenges, Duval was largely successful in his efforts to establish a stable and effective territorial government in Florida. These accomplishments included:

1. The negotiation of multiple treaties with Native American groups, including the treaty of Moultrie Creek (1823)
2. The development of Florida's infrastructure. In Duval's first address to the territorial legislative council, Duval details his plans to develop a more centralized capital to join together East and West Florida

Despite the previously listed accomplishments, Duval still was not properly serving his role as Governor when he was not in the territory. Duval's absenteeism repeatedly left George Walton serving as Florida Territory's Acting Governor. Walton wrote about this practice protesting "I regret extremely, that Gov. DuVal should have found it absolutely necessary to be absent from the Territory at this particular juncture. During the prevalence of the fever, domestic duties of the most imperative and irresistible character precluded me an opportunity of having scarcely any conversation with him, relative to Indian Affairs."

References:

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- Carter, Clarence Edwin, and John Porter Bloom. Story. In *The Territorial Papers of the United States* 22, 22:860-64. United States Government Printing Office, 1934. Society, Florida Historical (1932).
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- Denham, James M. *Florida Founder William P. DuVal Frontier Bon Vivant*. Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2015.