

## **Tucker, Tilghman Mayfield** <sup>[1]</sup>

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by William S. Powell, 1996

**5 Feb. 1802–30 Apr. 1859**

Tilghman Mayfield Tucker, congressman and governor of Mississippi, was born near Lime Stone Springs, the son of John, a farmer, and Margaret Mayfield Tucker. The family moved to Mississippi when he was young, and for a time he worked as a blacksmith before studying law under Daniel W. Wright in Hamilton, Monroe County. After receiving a license he moved to Columbus in the newly created adjoining Lowndes County and established a thriving practice. Elected to the lower house of the legislature in 1831, he served until 1836, when he was elected to the state senate. He remained there until 1842.

On 1 Nov. 1841 Tucker was elected governor as a Democrat by a mere eight votes over his Whig opponent and was inaugurated on 10 Jan. 1842. In May he attended a dinner in honor of Dr. James Hagan, editor of the *Vicksburg Sentinel*, where he was one of the speakers. Because of his remarks, the governor received a challenge to a duel from former senator Sargeant S. Prentiss, who inquired whether Tucker approved of Hagan's editorials attacking Prentiss. General John A. Quitman represented Prentiss in delivering a series of thirteen very formal but interesting notes exchanged between the two men. Dueling as a means of settling a question of honor had virtually ended, and rhetoric in this case, with each participant in the dispute employing language to save face and as well, perhaps, his life, seems to have ended the matter. There was no duel of bullets, only words. Prentiss, a native of Maine, soon moved to New Orleans.

As governor, Tucker was concerned with legislative repudiation of Union Bank bonds, completion of the new Executive Mansion, and reapportionment of his state's congressional representation. At the end of his two-year term in 1843, he was elected to Congress, where he served during the period 1843–45. He soon retired to his plantation, Cottonwood, in Louisiana.

Tucker was married in 1829 to Sarah F. McBee and after her death to Martha A. Conger in 1854. He died while visiting his father in Marion County, Ala., and was buried there.

#### **References:**

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Virginia Quitman McNealus, *Code Duello: Letters Concerning the Prentiss-Tucker Duel of 1842* (1931).

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*Who Was Who in America*, vol. 1 (1967).

#### **Additional Resources:**

"Tucker, Tilghman Mayfield, (1802 - 1859)." *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*. Washington, D.C.: The Congress. <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=T000404> <sup>[2]</sup> (accessed March 25, 2014).

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[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography](#), University of North Carolina Press. <sup>[7]</sup>

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