

JOHN W.S. Dillion 1898-1899

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BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN W. S. DILLON

Birthplace

John William Sherman Dillon was born May 4, 1868, in Allen Township, Worth County, Missouri, and twelve miles southeast of Grant City. The place of his birth was a farm on which his father and mother settled in 1867.

Here he grew to manhood and gained a country school education, proving himself an average student in most studies, excepting arithmetic, in which he excelled his fellow students. The first day he went to a country school was at what is called the Stormer Schoolhouse, 2+ miles from his home. This was only a few days after he had passed his fifth birthday. His first teacher was F. A. Roche, who was a college student in the New England states before coming to Missouri. He continued to walk to and from this school until he was ten years of age, when the district was divided, and from thence on he went to what was called the Williams School, which was 1+ miles from his home.



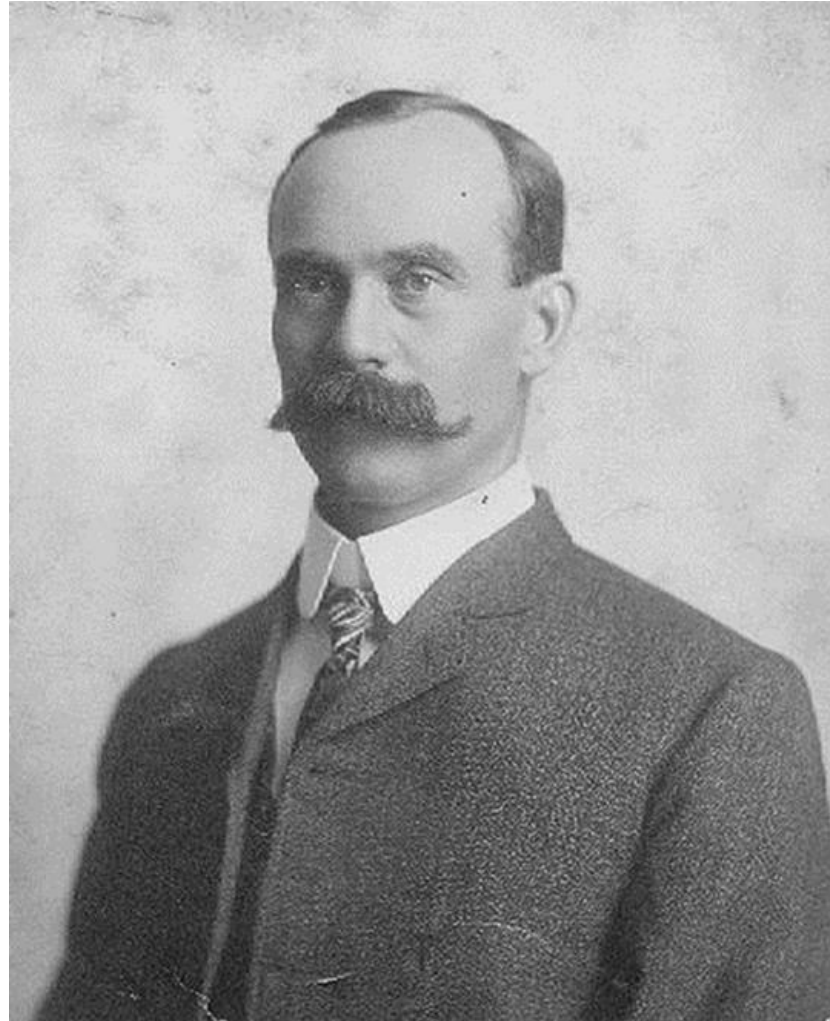
Enters High School

On account of being overheated in the harvest field when he was fifteen years of age, he suffered from a heart injury for a few years and did not go to school again until he was nineteen years of age. When he entered the high school at Albany, Missouri, under G. M. Castor as superintendent, and there, by hard study, brought up the various common school studies in which he found himself considerably lacking. In practical and higher arithmetic he excelled all his fellow students here, as he had done in the country school. Following this he spent six months in the Stanberry Normal School, which was a private school managed by Allen Moore and John E. Fesler. Here he succeeded in bringing up his knowledge of English to a point that enabled him to pass an entrance examination to the Missouri State University covering two years of English in that institution.

The following fall and winter he spent largely in debating societies at the Williams Schoolhouse, the Dry Schoolhouse and the Pine Schoolhouse.

Enters State University

In September, 1889, he entered the Missouri State University and pursued what was called the bachelor of letters course of study, and included the courses in military science and in pedagogy. In 1892 he graduated in the military course, which at that time was considered equal to one-half the military course at West Point. He also graduated in the junior course in pedagogy, which entitled him to a state certificate as teacher. During the last semester of his work at the university he was carrying thirty-seven hours of recitations per week, which was nearly double the regular course prescribed for students. Among the eminent teachers under whom he studied in the state university were Doctor Fisher and Doctor Jones in Latin; Doctor Allen in English; Dr. William Benjamin Smith and Professor Tyndall in mathematics; Professor Broadhead in geology; Doctor Blackwell and Professor Hoffman in modern languages; Dr. J.



P. Blanton in psychology and pedagogy. He attained first rank and distinction grades in most of his studies and led some of his classes with a one hundred grade on every examination. He was enabled to carry the large number of studies and attain the high grades only through the most constant and diligent application, utilizing all his spare hours during the summer, as well as every spare moment during the student year.

University Building Burns

It was during his last year at the university that the large main building of the university burned, and as a result an extra session of the State Legislature was called by Governor Francis and a movement was set on foot to remove the state university to Sedalia, Missouri. Finally this matter was settled by the people of Columbia contributing \$50,000 and a large appropriation being made by the Legislature, which,

added to the insurance of \$247,000 on the building, enabled the university curators to rebuild on a much more elaborate scale.

Teaches Prairie Home School

In September, 1892, he began teaching at the Prairie Home School, four miles north of Blackburn, in Saline County, Missouri, and continued teaching here through a second year, or until the spring of 1894. He attained a very high degree of success at this place in teaching and brought away with him recommendations from members of the school board and others to the effect that he was the best disciplinarian and instructor the school had had. His salary the first year was \$60 per month and the second year was \$70 per month, and he was offered \$80 per month to teach the school the third year, which at that time was an unprecedented wage for a country school anywhere in Missouri.

Elected Superintendent Of Grant City Schools

However, owing to the death of his father the previous fall, he returned to his home in Worth County, where his mother and two sisters still resided on the home farm. He was then hired by the Grant City School Board as superintendent of the Grant City School, of which he took charge in the fall of 1894, having passed an examination for state teacher's certificate under State Superintendent Wolfe and Professor Muir at a state institute at Moberly, Missouri, where he was highly complimented by his instructors as having written the best papers on the examinations they had had in the same studies.

Prepares School For Articulation With University

Within the first two months of his teaching in Grant City he succeeded in changing all the text books in the high school, and with the HISTORY OF NORTHWEST MISSOURI 2089 cooperation of the school board started the new course of study, fulfilling the requirements for articulation with the state university. It was at this time that Latin was first studied in the Grant City schools, and Mr. Dillon found much opposition to this study, even from the better classes of the city; some of the professional men argued that it was a dead language and that there was no practical use for it, but before he closed his work as a teacher in Grant City he saw Latin become very popular.

Elected To University Chairs

In the fall of 1896 he was elected to the chair of Latin and the chair of political economy in the Campbell University at Holton, Kansas, an institution which was said to stand next to the Kansas University in course of study, requirements and capabilities at that time. Mr. Dillon was not to take active charge of his duties in this university until the Grant City School closed, in May, 1897. During the winter

intervening Mr. Dillon had due time to consider the ten year contract he had for the chairs in the Campbell University and decided that if he fulfilled that engagement it would make him a teacher for lifetime, as he would then be too old to adapt himself readily to a new profession, and for that reason he resigned the chairs of Latin and political economy in February, 1897, with the determination to give up teaching entirely, although he was very much in love with the work and closed his last year in the school at Grant City with a unanimous recommendation from the school board as one of the best instructors and disciplinarians that had ever occupied the position.

Conducted Father's Farm

During the three years that he was superintendent of the Grant City School he conducted and operated his father's farm, where his mother and two sisters lived, and put into cultivation considerable acreage of new land.

Was Columbian Guard At World's Fair

Reverting to the first years of teaching, in April, 1893, he went to Chicago and became a member of the Columbian Guards at the World's Fair held in commemoration of the four hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America by Columbus. He remained nearly four months at the World's Fair, serving about three months as a member of Company No. 24 of the Columbian Guards. His duties engaged him at the Woman's Building, the entrance to the Midway Plaisance, the Children's Building, the Puck Building, and the White Star Line Steamship's Building. He proved himself capable and efficient in this position and still possesses recommendations from both the captain and the first sergeant of his company, testifying as to his ability and honesty and good character during his service at the World's Fair.

Elected Commander Missouri Division Sons Of Veterans In the latter part of 1896 he was elected captain of Shiloh Camp No. 48, Sons of Veterans, which was at that time organized in Grant City. In 1897 he attended the state encampment of the Sons of Veterans at Warrensburg, Missouri, where he was elected junior vice commander of the state division. This was the third official position of the order in the state. The next year, in 1898, at the annual encampment held at Carthage, Missouri, he was elected commander of the Missouri Division, Sons of Veterans, which included the states of Missouri, Arkansas and Texas. In this position he was quite active and devoted a large part of his time to the interest of his division. The annual encampment the next year, under his command, was held at Kirksville, Missouri. He still holds the rank of past commander in the order.

Tours Canada And Eastern United States

Having given up the profession of teaching in 1897, he decided to take a vacation and also to give his two sisters some recreation and change after their long vigil at the

bedside of their mother, who died the 27th day of March, 1897, and consequently, in July, the three started on a tour of the East, landing first at Buffalo, New York, where they spent a week with the Grand Army Encampment, and at Niagara Falls; thence to Hamilton, Toronto, Montreal and Quebec, Canada; thence to Mount Washington; Portland, Maine; Boston, Massachusetts; Albany, Newburg, New York City, Philadelphia, Washington, District of Columbia, and numerous other points. On this trip Mr. Dillon made a special effort to become acquainted with the professions of law and journalism, and the opportunity for the study of each in the East. At the University of Cincinnati he heard two lectures on law by W. H. Taft. The next time he saw Mr. Taft was at the White House at Washington, District of Columbia, when Mr. Taft was President of the United States, and Mr. and Mrs. Dillon were on their wedding tour of the East.

Makes Genealogical Investigations

It was on the return part of the trip in 1897, when Mr. Dillon and his sisters reached Lawrence County, Ohio, where their parents were both reared and where many of their relatives still lived, that Mr. Dillon spent considerable time in gathering all the genealogical data known to the living relatives. Acknowledgment of much valuable information is due to his great-uncle, John Dillon, and to his uncles, Peter H. Dillon and William Dillon, and to H. J. Dennison for the genealogical record of his grandparents, Vincent and Mrs. Hannah Dillon. Also acknowledgment is due to the step-grandmother, Mrs. Elizabeth Rapp; to his uncles, August and Abner Rapp, and to John Snyder, as well as to numerous others for much valuable information concerning his grandparents, John Rapp and Catharine Rapp.

Dillion Ancestry—Paternal

His grandfather, Vincent Dillon, was born in Green County, Pennsylvania, on January 1, 1809. Vincent Dillon's father was John Dillon, who was born in the same county and on the same homestead, shortly after the close of the Revolutionary war of America. John Dillon's father was Thomas Dillon, who was born in the County of Mayo on the Shannon River in Ireland, and arrived in America in time to take part in the latter struggles in the Revolutionary war. He was a weaver by trade and followed this trade to the time of his death. His son, John Dillon, took part in the War of 1812.

Northmen From Denmark

The Dillon genealogy extends back almost indefinitely, but later writers confine themselves mainly to that part beginning with the year HISTORY OF NORTHWEST MISSOURI 885 A. D., when Siegfried, a noted sea king of the Danish Vikings, ascended the Seine River with 40,000 Vikings, composed of Danish Northmen, in 700 vessels, and besieged Paris for ten months. Many of these Vikings or Northmen remained in Southern France, and among them was one who was so

strong and agile that the natives of France called him DeLion. Through the wear of years this was gradually shortened to Dillon. Two hundred years later, or in the year 1185, Chevalier Henry Dillon of Aquitaine, a descendant of the Northman who came over with Siegfried came to Ireland in the train of Henry II and acquired large possessions on the River Shannon, which were granted and continued to him by the king, and which became known as "Dillon's Country." This was the beginning of the race of Dillon's in Ireland, and it was from this Dillon's Country that Thomas Dillon came to Green County, Pennsylvania.

Dillon's In Medieval Wars

Among the Dillon's who attained distinction in the medieval wars was Viscount Theobald Dillon and his son, Count Arthur Dillon, Chevalier James de Dillon and Count Henry de Dillon. The last four named had the famous Dillon Regiment in France. Their living in France was due to the fact that their ancestors had been expatriated from Ireland at the time of Cromwell's usurpation, about 1640. A fifth brother became Archbishop of Toulouse and also Archbishop of Norborne, but at the time of the French revolution was beheaded. At the guillotine a court lady under sentence to be beheaded terrifiedly turned to Archbishop Dillon and asked him to go first, to which he replied, "Certainly; anything to favor the lady." Another one of the Dillon's, a little later in the line, who attained distinction in the military service, was Col. Arthur Dillon, whose regiment was connected with that of Count D'Estaing in assisting the American revolutionists to defeat the British.

Grand Maternal Ancestry English

The wife of Vincent Dillon was Hannah Jackson. Her grandfather was Henry Jackson, who was of pure English descent. He was a man weighing over two hundred pounds and lived to be eighty or ninety years of age. Before the revolution he lived where Washington, District of Columbia, now stands, and often herded his horses on the "Old Poison Fields," which has since become the location of the capitol of the United States. During the Revolutionary war he and his family were at a fort near his farm. Afterward they removed to Green County, Pennsylvania, and then to Guernsey County, Ohio, where he died. The above references to the Dillon genealogy show that J. W. S. Dillon was of Irish, French and English descent on his father's side.

Maternal Lineage

In his genealogical search at the time referred to when in Southern Ohio, Mr. Dillon found that both his mother's parents were born at Felbach, near Stuttgart, in the Kingdom of Württemberg, Germany. He found that his grandmother's maiden name was Catharine Elsasser, and that some time in earlier centuries that their ancestors had been given that name because of the fact that they had come from the Province of Alsace-Lorraine.

Rapps In Napoleonic Times

Mr. Dillon found that his mother's father, John Rapp, was born at Schlaght, seventy-two miles from Stuttgart. Tradition has it that many centuries before this the ancestors of Rapp had lived in the southern part of Gaul, later known as Aquitania, and probably were among the original Franks of the first and second centuries. And it was said that about the time of the Sicilian Vespers, in 1282, that the Rapps moved across the Rhine to the Kingdom of Württemberg. John Rapp's father's name was John Rapp, who had what at that time was quite a large landed estate of 1,100 acres, and his standing with the Austrian Royalty conferred on him the task of furnishing herds of cattle to the Austrian armies while fighting Napoleon's armies. The contract with the Austrian emperor was that Rapp should be paid for all the cattle which he attempted to take to the Austrian armies, whether they were delivered or captured by the French armies, but in later years the claims for cattle not delivered were repudiated, because of the very serious financial straits of the Austrian Government. Hence the claims amounting to 200,000 guilders worth of cattle, which had been captured from Rapp by the French army at different times, were repudiated. The last and one of the largest losses suffered by Rapp in this way was when he was driving 80,000 guilders worth of cattle to General Mack, whose army had suddenly been besieged at Ulm by Napoleon. This herd of cattle was captured by Napoleon's troops. In 1807, John Rapp was murdered by the French soldiers.

Returned From Moscow

John Rapp, Jr., was impressed into the French service when Napoleon began his march to Moscow in Russia, and Rapp was one of the few of Napoleon's troops who returned from that terrible retreat of the grand army. Later John Rapp enlisted in Blucher's army, and at the Battle of Waterloo was fighting against the soldiers who had killed his own father, and there helped defeat Napoleon. Immediately after this battle John Rapp came to America and settled at Barboursville, Kentucky, and later in Lawrence County, Ohio, where Jane Rapp, the mother of the subject of this sketch, was born and raised.

Mother of J. W. S. Dillon

Miss Jane Rapp was married to Isaac Dillon, August 4, 1867, and joined with her husband in building a home and raising a family on their farm in Worth County. Mrs. Dillon was a woman of wonderful perseverance and had the strict German training from her parents that caused her to train her children not only to be scrupulously honest and honorable in every respect, but to be considerate of both persons and property. The financial success of her husband was doubtless due almost as much to her efforts as to his. She was an unusually good manager and sacrificed her life largely in her ambition to raise her children in the way she thought they ought to go. Her death on March 27, 1897, at the age of manhood on his father's farm, which is located

one mile east of Scott Town, in Lawrence County, Ohio. He taught school near his home and prepared to go to college, but this arrangement was broken into by a desire to go West with his brother, P. H. Dillon, and his brother-in-law, J. Q. Hagerman, all of whom came to Missouri, starting April 12, 1859. At Kansas City, Missouri, P. H. Dillon and Isaac Dillon came near purchasing ten acres of land for \$1,000; the only thing that prevented them from making this purchase was the fact that P. H. Dillon was attacked with a case of malaria and was afraid that he could not live there in case they purchased the land. Had they completed this purchase of the ten acres, situated in what is now the heart of Kansas City, Missouri, it would have made them millions of dollars. Isaac Dillon came on to Worth County, Missouri, and taught school in that county and in Ringgold County, Iowa, until the spring of 1862, having, in the meantime, purchased eighty acres of land twelve miles southwest of what is now Grant City. He was teaching school at the Dry Schoolhouse in the spring of 1862, when the war excitement became so great and the soldiers passing by the schoolhouse and through the vicinity so greatly occupied the attention of, not only the scholars, but the patrons as well, that it was decided to discontinue the school. He immediately went to St. Joseph and enlisted in the Fifth Missouri Cavalry under General Peniek, with whom he served until the regiment was mustered out fourteen months later. During this service he was in many of the skirmishes with Quantrell's guerrillas, and Isaac Dillon was one of the special guard to go to the home of Mrs. Samuels, who at that time was Mrs. James, the mother of Frank and Jesse James, and investigate an attack which was the result of a bomb being thrown into the house and tearing off the arm of Mrs. James. The guard, of which Isaac Dillon was a member, arrested certain parties who were presumed to have been connected with this deed, and these parties were given a trial by the Military Court, a result of which the writer does not know.

Father In Civil War

Upon being mustered out of General Penick's Regiment, Isaac Dillon immediately reenlisted at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, in the Second Kansas Cavalry, with which he served until the spring of 1864, when he was taken prisoner at Poison Springs, Arkansas, while in a guard of 1,500 men accompanying 300 foraging wagons filled with corn. A part of the guard was surrounded by General Price's army of eight or ten thousand men, and just before being taken prisoner Isaac Dillon was shot through the right arm, just above the elbow; from this wound he suffered several months in the prisons, and on account of it his arm was disabled for life. At the close of the war he was at Camp Ford, Texas, where, on account of their isolation, it was not learned that the war was over for several months, and he continued as a prisoner of the Confederates. Finally he was discharged and went to New Orleans and embarked on a boat to St. Louis, Missouri, and thence to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, on the Missouri River, where he was mustered out on the 8th of September, 1865, and compelled to

prove that he was alive, as his captain had marked him dead in the report of the battle at Poison Springs, Arkansas.

Marriage Of Parents

From Leavenworth, Kansas, he returned to Worth County, Missouri, where he taught school until 1867. He was married on August 4, 1867, to Miss Jane Rapp, and they settled on the farm which he had purchased before the war, and there underwent the struggle of the pioneers and raised a family of one son, J. W. S. Dillon, and two daughters, Avouia and Greta Dillon. Although he failed in his ambition to be a college man, Isaac Dillon was a student and all his life kept in intelligent touch with all current events. He and his wife were ambitious in that their children have a good education and that their son becomes a graduate of the Missouri State University. Isaac Dillon was a man five feet ten inches in height with very dark hair; slender, weighing about one hundred and twenty-four pounds; was always active and energetic and directed his business in an intelligent and systematic manner. At his death, which occurred October 30, 1893, it was said by all who knew him that he did not have an enemy among all with whom he had become acquainted while he lived in Worth County. He was fifty-eight years old at the time of his death and his death was brought on by sciatica, which was the result of an attack of grippe about a year previous. He and his wife both had very high ideals of honesty and integrity and were very diligent in instilling these qualities into their children. Besides the above outline of genealogical facts in the Dillon, Jackson, Rapp and Elsasser families, John W. S. Dillon secured about one hundred pages of typewritten data concerning these families that is of interest to relatives, and many stirring events would be of interest to the public were there time and space for relating them.

Has Waterloo Saber

Among the mementoes of the Napoleonic period in Europe found on this trip by J. W. S. Dillon was the saber carried by John Rapp in the Battle of Waterloo and probably carried by him on his march to Moscow in earlier years. In 1908 J. W. S. Dillon was again in Lawrence County, Ohio, and was presented with this sword by his uncle, Abner Rapp, to whom it had been presented at an earlier date by Mrs. Naomi Whitley of Huntington, West Virginia. Mr. Dillon now has it at his home in Grant City. At one time on his return march from Moscow John Rapp secured a loaf of bread, which doubtless stood between him and starvation on that march with both winter and the Cossacks on their heels and killing the French troops by the hundreds of thousands. Another soldier saw Rapp with the loaf of bread and entered into a saber battle with him for the possession of the bread. The soldier caught Rapp on the chin with his saber, which threw him off his guard; Rapp took advantage of this opportunity to dispatch the soldier and thereby retained the loaf of bread, which may

have been the slender thread of nourishment that enabled him to keep up his march until safe within his own country.

At the close of his genealogical search, J. W. S. Dillon and his two sisters returned to their home farm in Worth County, Missouri, in the latter part of 1897, where Mr. Dillon lived for about a year and conducted the farm.

Purchases Grant City Star

One afternoon about the 1st of August, 1898, he drove to Grant City on business. He found, accidentally, that the Grant City Star was for sale and purchased the newspaper. He edited and managed the paper five years; the circulation had doubled from the time of his purchase. Since 1903, the Star has had a larger circulation in proportion to county population than any local weekly newspaper in Missouri. Such an accomplishment is not so difficult as it might seem, as Worth County is the smallest in the state and hence the population is more compactly situated near the county seat.

Newspaper Policies

Mr. Dillon's newspaper policy has always been to give the best service to its subscribers. He has always been on the square with all of them and their friendship is largely due to his honest dealing and hard work. It has not been his policy to attack unjustly or indulge in personalities, but he has fearlessly stood for justice and right regardless of personal interests, but wraps the mantle of charity about the mistakes of the earnest but misguided. The politics of the paper has been republican from its founding in 1867 and so ably has Mr. Dillon fought the political battles of his party that it has won many victories.

In Politics

In politics Mr. Dillon has been a republican from the time of his first vote, but not so strict that he would vote for any kind of man just because he was on his own ticket. In 1898 he made a short campaign of 2 weeks in the Third Congressional District for the republican nomination for Congress. At the convention at Excelsior Springs, August 22d, he was defeated by J. E. Goodrich, a former classmate at the state university. 1 tie Mr. Goodrich won by one-half of a vote, but was defeated by the large scow democratic majority in the November election.

Chairman Of Republican Committee

Mr. Dillon was elected chairman of the Republican Committee of Worth County three successive terms and finally gave up the position that because of pressing official duties. At the three elections held while he was the chairman of the committee, more republicans were elected than at any other three elections in the history of the county.

Postmaster At Grant City

On December 17, 1903, Mr. Dillon was commissioned postmaster at Grant City to succeed J. F. Okey, resigned. This commission was signed by President Roosevelt. On January 13, 1908, he was re-commissioned by President Roosevelt. On March 18, 1912, he was commissioned for a third term by President Taft. The office is a middle third class office and noted its receipts have increased by about two thousand dollars a year since Mr. Dillon took possession of the office. He also moved the office into his building on the west side of the square, where he fitted up modern equipment. This was in 1904. Again in the beginning of 1915 he re-furnished the Department of Commerce and Labor, and by Senator Bradley, of Kentucky, and Senator Bourne, of Oregon. All these gentlemen passed the record as good. His last term will soon expire and he will be succeeded by a democrat.

Married To Miss Frances Mullins

On June 16, 1909, J. W. S. Dillon was married to Miss Frances Mullins, daughter of Major and Mrs. A. W. Mullins, of Lioueus, Missouri. Major Mullins and wife were formerly Kentuckians and Major Mullins served with distinction in the Civil war. He has been one of the leading lawyers of the state and is also a banker. Mrs. Dillon is a graduate of Christian College at Columbia, Missouri, and of the Central College at Lexington, Missouri. She specialized in English literature, music and art. Mrs. Dillon is interested in literary work and is active in working for local civic improvements.

All People Trace Back To First Of Human Race

An epitome of the nationalities from which J. W. S. Dillon sprang show that his origin is about equally from the English, Irish, French and German races. The analysis of the above branches shows that they are in turn derived from the various earlier nations and tribes of Europe, such as the Franks, the Iberians, the Scandinavians, especially the Danish Northmen, and some of these were descended from the Goths; also the Romans, the Teutons, Saxons are among the races from which the subject of this sketch descended. All of these in turn would be traced to still earlier nationalities, if history existed, and would go finally to the beginning of the human race. This is merely the history of every human being of the present time and none in America believe in the classes as they used to exist in Europe, but in the merit of the individual.

American Spirit

As a result of this American spirit most people forget their ancestors. Mr. Dillon claims no merit from his ancestors, excepting that in all of his tracings he was unable to find a single instance of a crime of any sort committed by an ancestor, and all were honorable and honest. Mr. Dillon feels that he is even more American in spirit after having made a study of his European ancestors than he was before he knew anything of them. He has asked that some mention be made in this biography in order that the

descent of the average human being may be illustrated. The National Tribune, June 16, 1898

America's Bulwark

Mr. Dillon believes that if Americans will continue to be honest individually and collectively that America will never meet the fate of the republics whose downfall have inevitably resulted from dishonesty and corruption that has gradually crept among the people as they saw how opportunities opened easily where everyone was free to do as he wished. If America will avoid this one pitfall he believes that nothing can destroy the Government. *Source: A History of Northwest Missouri Volume III; publ. 1915 in III Volumes; Edited by Walter Williams; Submitted to Genealogy Trails and transcribed by Andrea Stawski Pack*