

Office of the Vermont Secretary of State Vermont State Archives

Matthew Lyon, "Impeachment" Requested, But Not Acted On, 1779



Though the term "impeachment" was used in this case, it was more accurately an attempt to expel a member of the House. Matthew Lyon (1746-1820) was a native of Ireland who came to America as an indentured servant and ended up being elected to Congress from three states (Vermont, Kentucky, and Arkansas). He was in Vermont by 1774 and held a variety of state and local posts, including Arlington town representative from 1779-1782. Associated with Vermont's radical republicans, Lyon married one of Thomas Chittenden's

daughters. He is most widely remembered for being elected to Congress while incarcerated for violation of the Alien and Sedition Acts (1798).

On October 21, 1779 Rep. Reuben Jones of Rockingham presented a signed note for impeachment against Rep. Matthew Lyon. Dr. Jones charged that Lyon, "sometime between the sitting of the General Assembly in February last and first of May 1779...did falsify change & alter the Public Records of this State..." These changes were apparently to a law regulating houses of public entertainment, passed at the February session. Dr. Reuben asserted Lyon had erased certain sections and inserted "several paragraphs in their stead; without being authorized in any manner whatever to do the same" which rendered Lyon "wholly unworthy of the trust and confidence of the Freeman of the State and highly deserving the public animadversion of the House as a member dangerous to the Commonwealth." (Manuscript Vermont State Papers, Vol. 17, Page 24, Vermont State Archives).

The General Assembly resolved that Lyon not be impeached and further resolved "that this Assembly will not act any more on the paper signed by Reuben Jones (called an impeachment) against Mr. Lyon at present." ([Vermont State Papers](#), Vol. III, Part. I, p.83).