March 4, 1849

*This Date in Missouri Senate History*

On *This Date in Missouri Senate History*, the date was March 4, 1849, the day a Missourian served as U.S. president — if only for a day.

David Rice Atchison was born in Kentucky in 1807, but moved to northwest Missouri in 1830. Just four years later, he was elected to the Missouri House of Representatives, where he would spend the next seven years.

Prior to the 17th Amendment and the direct election of United States senators, those positions were appointed by state legislatures. Atchison was first appointed by the Missouri General Assembly to serve in the U.S. Senate in 1843, where he would soon become president pro tem.

On March 4, 1849, President-Elect Zachary Taylor refused to be sworn into office because it was a Sunday. Since he didn’t receive the Oath of Office until the following day, and James Polk’s term ended at noon on the 4th — as well as the term of the vice president — at the time, the U.S. Senate president pro tem was next in line.

One other note: *All* federal elected officials’ terms expired at noon on March 4, at that time. Technically, Atchison couldn’t have been president, because he was not *technically* a U.S. senator.

March 4, 1849, the date marking 24 hours when Missourian — and U.S. Senator David Rice Atchison, who was appointed to the position by the state Legislature — technically may have been United States president, on *This Date in Missouri Senate History*.

(Source: Missouri timeline, United States Senate website)