

# Goebel Campaign of 1899 Wa

## FINALLY SPLIT STATE ASUNDER

Taylor, Leading by 2,383 Votes  
on Returns, Lost Office by  
Legislative Action After  
Taking Oath

### VICTOR FATALLY WOUNDED

Kentucky has had far more than its share of memorable political campaigns—and still is having them. But even the lively gubernatorial contest of 1935, in which A. B. Chandler finally emerged victorious after several months of hectic pre-primary and pre-election campaigning, could not quite measure up to the gubernatorial campaign of 1899.

That was the year in which William Goebel, then a state senator, was nominated by the organization Democrats in the memorable Music Hall convention at Louisville—an act that finally was climaxed, early in 1900, by the assassination of Goebel and the elevation to the governor's chair of J. C. W. Beckham, nominee for lieutenant governor in that same convention.

The campaign really started in 1898, when Goebel, already a power in the Democratic party, succeeded in securing through action of the state legislature a new election law, generally referred to as the "Goebel law." By this act the election machinery was placed in the hands of three commissioners chosen by the assembly, and in county boards appointed by these commissioners. This law was condemned bitterly by the Republican party, and likewise by some of the state's most influential Democrats.

#### Goebel Began Campaign in January

Therefore when Goebel, on January 20, 1899, resigned from the Democratic state central committee and formally announced his candidacy for governor, strong and determined opposition arose immediately within the ranks of his own party. The Herald, whose editorial policies were at that time directed by W. C. P. Breckinridge, was among the newspapers and political leaders who stated that Goebel was not the man for the place and expressed the opinion that he could not win even if he were nominated.

Goebel nevertheless started his campaign almost immediately, the formal opening taking place at Lebanon on January 23. The crowd was large and his speech was applauded at times, "but there was no strong demonstration from the audience," said The Herald in its news columns the following morning.

Some of the foes of Goebel within the Democratic party began to cast about for a party leader who could upset the great advantage that Goebel held through control of the party organization. As a result two men entered the field against him—P. Wat Hardin and William J. Stone. The campaign swept dramatically through the late winter and spring months to its climax in the convention at the old Music Hall in Louisville, held in June. On the 27th of that month Goebel and

## Colonel of Old School



COL. WILLIAM GRUBBS

This picture was taken by Mullen, the Lexington photographer whose name is signed to so many of the excellent old prints in Lexington's family albums. It shows Col. William Grubbs, well known in Central Kentucky several decades ago, but the elaborate uniform he wore was not that of a colonel; it apparently was that of a Knight Templar. The picture was submitted by Mrs. J. M. Sloan, of 126 Clay avenue.

Beckham were nominated as governor and lieutenant governor, despite cries of "steam-roller" and "steal" that resulted from the alleged strong-arm tactics used by the Goebel wing to gain the victory. **Second Democratic Ticket Named**

Refusing to bow to the convention's verdict, the Democratic faction which had opposed him in the convention immediately made plans to put a dissenting Democratic ticket in the field. A convention was arranged, to be held in Lexington on August 16, and at this convention John Young Brown (not the present John Young Brown of Fayette county) was chosen as gubernatorial nominee of what it was decided to call the "Honest Election Democratic party."

In the meantime the Republicans,

also convening in Lexington, had on July 13 nominated William S. Taylor as governor, and the election campaign was on in earnest.

Stump speeches by the nominees and their supporters in half a dozen cities and towns were recorded almost daily in the pages of The Herald; and in almost every edition, during the last three months of the campaign, the issues were discussed in one or more editorials. On September 12 The Herald said editorially:

"The true issues of this campaign are honest party government, and free and honest elections. On these issues this contest is waged; here is the line of battle. On one side it is contended that party regularity is the prime and supreme question to be answered by every Demo-

crat and that no one is a Democrat who is not ready to vote for any nominee of a regular convention; that all matters of principles, all questions of conscience and morals, all claims of honesty and fair dealing are out of place in such a discussion; that all a Democrat has any right to ask, the only matter he has any right to consider, is—is the nomination by a regular convention? If so, he must vote for the nominee, no matter who he is or what he believes, or what he has done, or how and what methods obtained the nomination.

"On the other side this is denied, and it is urged that the party is bound by the laws of honesty and fair dealing; that fraud, force, bribery, intimidation, perjury, violation of pledges vitiate any act; that a declared nomination is not a valid nomination if obtained by such nefarious means; and that the sole object of the formation of any party is the good of the people and the preservation of our institutions, and that when this object is lost sight of and a nomination dishonestly obtained also means anti-Democratic policies and dishonest elections, every Democrat, every honest man, must unite with all good men to defeat that nomination and rescue that party from such fate.

"In a discussion upon such topics, in a contest about such matters, the attempt to interpose other questions is futile. The Herald has often repeated that at the bar of public opinion Mr. Goebel stands indicted, and that for which he stands is on trial; he stands for centralized power in party in elections—a power that can be corruptly used; that has been corruptly used. If Kentucky desires the perpetuation of that system she will elect Mr. Goebel—if she does not, then Mr. Goebel will be defeated. This is the issue."

#### Headlines From The Herald

Most modern newspapers, no matter what their politics, give space in their news columns to both sides during election campaigns; but it was by no means the rule in the Gay Nineties. The Herald was more progressive than some of its contemporaries; its columns frequently contained news stories giving the arguments of pro-Goebel as well as anti-Goebel speakers. Nevertheless, The Herald didn't exactly praise Goebel in the headlines. Among these heads, during the closing days of the campaign, were many such as these:

#### FIRST DUTY OF TODAY

Is the Defeat of Goebelism

#### BRYAN THE SUFFERER

His Visit to Lexington Did Goebel Little Good and Resulted in Harm to His Own Chances

#### KENTUCKY CAMPAIGN

The Struggle of the People Against the Machine; Goebel Can Not Be Elected on a Fair Count

#### DUTY OF EVERY MAN

To Respect His Own Right and Defend the Honor of the State

Finally came the red-letter election day of the century—November 7. In huge headlines the following morning, The Herald asserted:

#### GOEBEL IS DEFEATED

The Machine by Which He Sought to Siege