

combined to defeat him for the United States Senate. Dejected by having failed to achieve his cherished goal, Abbett finished his career by serving as a state supreme court judge. He died in his home in Jersey City on December 4, 1894, after an attack of sugar diabetes. He was buried in the family plot in the Greenwood Cemetery in Brooklyn.

By any standard Abbett was one of the ablest and most intriguing men ever to be governor. The social and economic conditions that existed in 1884 made New Jersey manipulable for someone with Abbett's sources of machine power and leadership ability. Few of his contemporaries were comparably positioned. A lifetime in politics had made him wise and ruthless in political bargaining and compromising. This experience, coupled with his determination to lead rather than follow, made him formidable. With a personality well suited for the intense partisanship of his time, he displayed great zest for party politics and party organization. Furthermore, in many ways he was considerably in advance of the times. In this sense, he was an important forerunner of a type of governor that had not yet appeared on the American political stage.

Records of Governor Leon Abbett, New Jersey State Library, Bureau of Archives and History, Trenton, N.J.


Hogarty, Richard A. "Leon Abbett of New Jersey: Precursor of the Modern Governor." Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1965.

The Record of Leon Abbett . . . as Assemblyman, Senator and Governor. Jersey City: Heppenheimer, 1889.

Shaw, Douglas V. *The Making of an Immigrant City: Ethnic and Cultural Conflict in Jersey City, New Jersey, 1850-1877.* New York: Arno Press, 1976.

Steffens, Lincoln. "New Jersey: A Traitor State." *McClure's Magazine* 24 (April 1905): 649-64.

Richard A. Hogarty



ROBERT STOCKTON GREEN (March 25, 1831-May 7, 1895) brought to the governorship a commanding presence, the status of a colonial elite ancestry, and more than three decades of political experience. His greatest single asset was his family name. However, he failed to exploit these obvious advantages. As chief of state, he was a model of dignity and restraint, a symbol of integrity and social respectability; but he lacked passion for his cause or against his opponents. He was cool and dispassionate, cultured and scholarly, impersonal and logical. The press respected him; the electorate admired him but did not embrace him as it had his predecessor Leon Abbett. He lacked both Abbett's zest for the strategy and tactics of party politics and his mastery of its subtleties. Although imbued with a strong sense of civic duty, Green nevertheless was a captive of the political system and the business interests that dominated it. As such, he did not assume an activist role in shaping public policy, and he did not distinguish himself in office.

A patrician by birth and disposition, Robert S. Green could lay claim to a sterling Yankee background. He was descended from a long line of Presbyterian ministers and a family that had been politically active in New Jersey since the American Revolution. His great-grandfather, the Reverend Jacob Green, had served as chairman of the committee that drafted the first state constitution at the Provincial Congress in Burlington in 1776. His grandmother, Elizabeth Stockton, was the daughter of Commodore Robert F. Stockton, who had been a naval hero in the War of 1812; she was also a direct descendant of Richard Stockton, who had signed the Declaration of Independence. These family credentials gave Green impeccable native-born, blue-

blood status. At a time when family lineage and patriotic loyalty counted heavily in state politics, Green was endowed by birth with a valuable political resource. Over the years, the gentry had held power by tradition, by law, by wealth and not, usually, through the electoral sanction of universal suffrage.

Green was born in Princeton. Not much is known about his early childhood except that he grew up in a household where religion was important, discipline strict, and the moral distinction between right and wrong clearly defined. His mother, the former Isabella McClulloh, read the Bible to her children, spun the material for their clothing, and tried to inculcate the values of honesty and ambition. Raised close to Nassau Hall, Robert received a fine education. He graduated from the College of New Jersey (later Princeton University) in 1850. The family was closely affiliated with the college. The Reverend Ashbel Green, Robert's grandfather, was a renowned theologian who had served as president of the college from 1812 to 1822. His father, James S. Green, was a member of the law faculty. James Green was a man of considerable influence. In addition to having served as a United States attorney, he had been the Democratic party's candidate for governor in 1837, losing in the legislative balloting to William S. Pennington, the Whig party nominee. He was also closely identified with the transportation interests of the state, and he served as a director of the Delaware and Raritan Canal Company as well as treasurer of the Joint Railroad and Canal Companies.

Determined to follow in his father's footsteps, Robert S. Green, entered the legal profession. As was the custom in those days, he read the law while clerking in a local firm. Admitted to the New Jersey bar in 1853, Green eventually earned repute as one of the ablest constitutional lawyers in the state. Meanwhile, he showed an early interest in politics. In 1852, he served a brief stint on the Princeton Borough Council. The family had a long-standing traditional as-

sociation with the Democratic party, which no doubt helped to launch his political career.

In 1856, Green moved from his home town to the city of Elizabeth, where he promptly became involved in the political effort to establish Union County. He was also instrumental that year in securing the passage of legislation that designated Elizabeth as the county seat. In 1857 Green married Mary E. Mulligan. In due course, they raised a son and three daughters. Step by step the young lawyer from Elizabeth climbed the political ladder, from prosecutor of the borough courts to city attorney to city councilman to surrogate of Union County. In 1868 he was named the presiding judge of the Court of Common Pleas. In 1869, Governor Theodore F. Randolph chose him to represent the state at the commercial convention in Louisville, Kentucky.

While still young and ambitious, Green came to accept the concept of litigation as a form of political action. He played a leading role in the struggle to break the Camden and Amboy Railroad monopoly of transportation rights between New York City and Philadelphia. This was no small accomplishment. The railroad had amassed enormous political power since its origin in 1831. One by one, legislators came to owe fealty to the home-grown monopoly, and they often succumbed to the blandishments of its lobbyists or to fears of political reprisal. At the time of the Civil War, when rail transportation was needed for military purposes, senators in Congress derisively referred to New Jersey as the "State of Camden and Amboy." The railroad, unwilling to give up its preferential treatment and its guaranteed freedom from competition, resisted newcomers with understandable passion. In 1872, Green brought suit against the monopoly on behalf of the National Railway Company, which had started building a competing line. Although the suit was denied, it stirred a fierce battle in the state legislature and directly led to the passage of the first general railroad law in 1873. With the

enactment of this statute, the monopoly was finally crushed. Only in these bold and daring attacks on the Camden and Amboy Railroad did Green win the status of popular hero.

Recognizing Green's talents, Governor Joel Parker appointed him in 1873 to a blue-ribbon commission instructed to revise the state constitution in the light of the myriad problems created for local governments by the onrush of urbanization and industrialization. Green chaired the important committee on general and special legislation. Among other things, the revised constitution forbade the legislature to pass special laws for individual cities and required tax authorities to assess property by uniform rules and according to its true value. The state legislature's unwarranted interference in municipal affairs had become a serious abuse. By identifying himself with tax reform and the home-rule movement, Green continued to improve his political standing.

For the next two decades, Green led a busy double life as attorney and state and national politician. With "railroad fever" sweeping New Jersey, Green became wealthy as a railroad lawyer. In January 1874 he became a member of the New York bar and joined the prestigious Wall Street law firm of Brown, Hall and Vanderpoel. As a Princeton alumnus he added to the firm's luster. He was later made a full partner, when the firm changed its name to Vanderpoel, Green and Cumming.

Never far removed from politics, Green served as a member of the Union County Democratic Committee, where his skills as a political organizer and campaign strategist were highly valued. In 1868, he made a bid for Congress, but he lost his party's nomination to John T. Bird of Hunterdon County by the bare margin of two votes. In 1880, he was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention which nominated General Winfield Scott Hancock, who had led the Union forces at Gettysburg. In 1884, Green finally obtained his party's nomination for Con-

gress, and he defeated the popular Republican incumbent John Kean, Jr., by a plurality of 1,848 votes.

Before his one term in Congress expired, Green decided to enter the gubernatorial race of 1886. However, he encountered considerable intraparty opposition for the nomination, mainly from the powerful "State House Ring," which backed Rufus Blodgett, manager of the New York and Long Branch Railroad. Aligned with the more progressive wing of his party, Green received the crucial support of major Democratic leaders like Leon Abbett and John R. McPherson, and he won the nomination.

The gubernatorial contest proved interesting. The Republicans ran Congressman Benjamin F. Howey of Warren County, a manufacturer of slate and roofing materials. The emotionally charged issue of temperance was soon interjected into the campaign. No other question did more to inflame religious and ethnic antagonisms. In the eyes of teetotaling, evangelical Protestants, drinking was an alien practice that posed a dangerous threat to public morality. They saw it as the root cause of crime, idleness, and poverty. As the campaign progressed, nativism and anti-Catholicism became intermingled with the temperance issue. Drunkenness was associated with immigrants, and Irish Catholics in particular were unfairly scapegoated. For his part, Green played for the Irish vote and gently embraced the liquor interests. On November 2, he defeated Howey by a vote of 109,939 to 101,919—a victory widely attributed to the surprise impact of the third-party candidate, Clinton B. Fiske, who ran on the Prohibition ticket. Advocating total abstinence as his main platform, Fiske polled 19,808 votes. Since Green only beat Howey by 8,020 votes, it was claimed at the time that Fiske's candidacy cost Howey the election.

Green's long experience as a judge and politician contributed little of direct value to him as governor. Entering the office at age fifty-six, he chose to play his role as chief of state in a subdued manner, shar-

ing initiative and responsibility generously with any who would ease his burdens of accountability. In political circles, he was easygoing, soft-spoken and low-keyed, allowing his wry, often subtle sense of humor to mask his ambition. He was unable to lead the state legislature on the important social issues of the day. He chose to cooperate with party bosses rather than try to dominate them, and the result was a placid and relatively unproductive term.

In his inaugural message, Green paid lip service to the problem of railroad taxation, but as governor he did not do much about it. At the outset of his term, the state board of assessors revealed that the recalcitrant Morris and Essex Railroad owed the state approximately \$1.2 million in back taxes. Rather than insist on payment in full, Green submitted the matter to arbitration. He did not press for a settlement, and the dispute was still unresolved when he left office three years later. He was equally lackadaisical about reorganizing the New Jersey National Guard. In spite of a Congressional mandate to do so, he preferred to leave the task to his successor.

Not surprisingly, a protracted controversy over liquor regulation dominated state politics during much of Green's administration. Temperance zealots publicized the state's failure to enforce its liquor law—at least in Jersey City, where many saloonkeepers openly defied the law and sold intoxicating beverages on Sunday. The violation outraged the Protestants, not only insulting the Christian Sabbath but also offending that sense of moralistic propriety so characteristic of small-town New Jersey. Evangelical church groups flocked to Trenton to petition the legislature to stop the flow of "pagan rum."

Intense lobbying aroused a Republican legislature to pass a stringent liquor control law in 1888. This statute mandated a system of high license fees and established a policy of local option whereby each county could decide in public referendum whether to prohibit the sale of

liquor. Brushing aside his Presbyterianism for the moment, Green, who wished to preserve his good relationship with the Abbett faction of his party, vetoed the temperance law, but the Republican-controlled legislature quickly overrode his veto.

Temperance next won easy local-option victories in six counties: Cumberland, Warren, Salem, Gloucester, Cape May, and Hunterdon. Stunned German, Irish and other liquor dealers from the cities sought to overthrow what they considered a tyrannical puritan blue law. The state supreme court upheld the law but the dealers demanded its repeal when the Democrats regained control of the legislature in 1889. Public opinion, however remained overwhelming in favor of its retention. Under mounting church pressure, Green stayed out of the picture, leaving other party leaders to negotiate a compromise that retained the high license fees but deleted the local option provision. His failure to lead did not pass unnoticed.

In many ways, constituents and leader were not closely attuned to each other's calculations. Although Green courted the support of urban factory workers, he did little or nothing to help them. Several bills designed to eliminate the hiring of Pinkerton detectives as strikebreakers and union infiltrators were introduced, but they failed to become laws for want of strong gubernatorial leadership. The same fate befell a ballot-reform bill strongly supported by organized labor.

Similarly, Green spurned the Irish shortly after he took office. He showed his nativism by curtly refusing to attend a mass protest rally against British rule of Ireland and the attendant abuse of human rights. Interpreting his refusal as an ethnic insult, the Irish, who consistently gave the Democrats large numbers of votes, considered him an ingrate. His leadership style contrasted sharply with Abbett's, which attempted to have the party uphold the traditional Protestant hegemony without outraging its Irish voters.

Green cooperated with the dominant business community both openly and covertly. Ideologically, he conformed to the safe, comfortable conservatism that characterized the age of industrial expansion. Under his administration, business interests were prominent and powerful. For example, he signed into law the famous statute of 1889 that legalized the holding company and allowed businesses to incorporate for almost any purpose.

Upon leaving office, Green was appointed by his successor, Leon Abbett, to the New Jersey Court of Chancery. Some observers criticized the appointment as a political payoff, but Green performed well as a judge. His temperament seemed better suited for the judiciary than the executive. He died in Elizabeth on May 7, 1895, while serving on the bench. Interment was in the Greenwood Cemetery in Brooklyn.

All things considered, Green was not an effective governor. His concept of the office lacked sufficient scope, his programs were innocuous, and his leadership was insignificant. The essence of the gubernatorial role escaped him both as party leader and policy leader. He found it a burden rather than an exciting opportunity. The Green administration earned the admiration of the business community, but it did not capture the passion of the times or the imagination of the electorate.

Richard A. Hogarty



GEORGE THEODORE WERTS (March 24, 1846-January 17, 1910), lawyer, state senator, supreme court justice, twenty-eighth governor of New Jersey, was born at Hackettstown, Warren County. He attended the public schools in Bordentown and completed his academic training at

the State Model School in Trenton. In 1863 he moved to Morristown to study law with his uncle, the former Attorney General Jacob Vanatta. Four years later the twenty-one-year-old law clerk was admitted to the New Jersey bar. He promptly established an office in Morristown.

Over the next sixteen years Werts built a lucrative law practice and gained a reputation for integrity and skill as a trial lawyer. Although he was a Democrat in an overwhelmingly Republican community, he was elected recorder of Morristown in 1883 and mayor in 1886. In the latter year, at the age of forty, he was also elected state senator from Morris County. His political success was due in no small measure to his wife, the former Emma Stelle, whom he had married in 1872. His marriage and the subsequent births of his two daughters helped fill an important social and emotional void in his life.

During his six years in the senate Werts compiled a commendable record, highlighted by his election as senate president in 1889. His name is associated with two pieces of legislation—election reform and local liquor option—but neither statute proved more than a politically motivated and ineffectual expedient. His independent legislative record nonetheless brought him to the attention of Governor Leon Abbett. The governor's term would expire in 1893, and he had his eye on a seat in the United States Senate. Fearing that a promising young legislator with political ambitions might threaten his plans, the governor appointed Werts to the state supreme court in February 1892 to fill a vacancy on the Hudson County circuit.

Abbett had little need for concern. Werts was a party man who had previously demonstrated his loyalty by sponsoring an act that shortly before Abbett's inauguration doubled the governor's salary. In 1892, despite his earlier fears, the governor supported Werts for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination rather than allowing one of his political enemies to gain the nomination. Although the Democratic caucus had considered both Edward F. C. Young and Justice Job Lippincott,