

The Cupola

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Pardee Home Museum

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Oakland City
Landmark 1975
National Register of
Historic Places 1976
California Historic
Landmark 1998

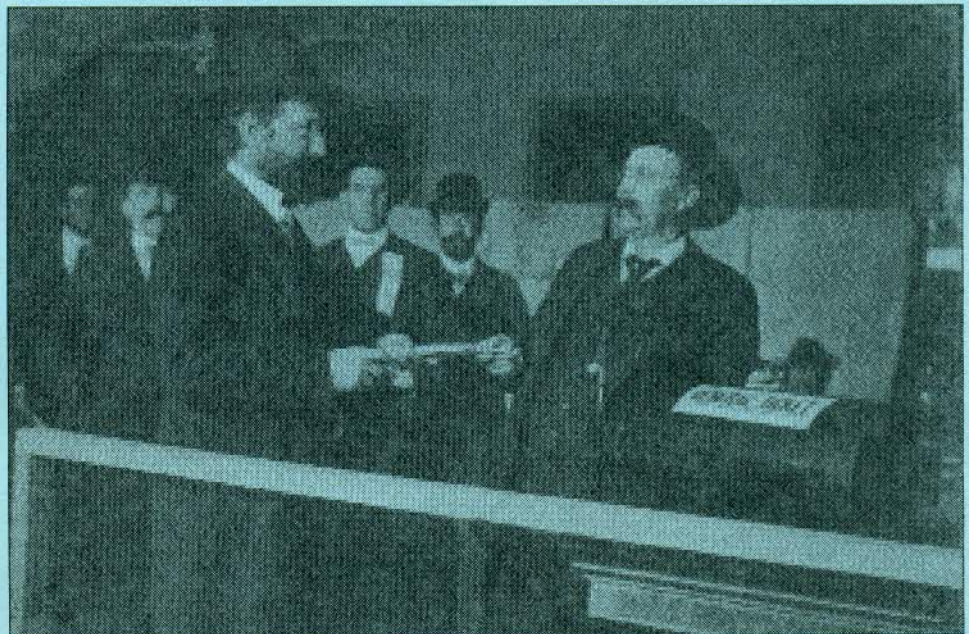
Special Issue: One hundred years ago...

Republican George Pardee Narrowly Elected California Governor over Democrat Franklin Lane

One of the few significant similarities between gubernatorial campaigns in California 100 years ago and today is that election day - then and now - has come on the first Tuesday in November. It was indeed on Tuesday, November 4, 1902, that the voters of California decided between Democrat Franklin Lane and Republican George Pardee as their choice for the next governor of California. However, the final outcome of the election was not known the next day, because this election was a real cliffhanger - in fact, the closest gubernatorial election in the state's history.

It wasn't until two or three days later that California newspapers could report with certainty the final results: 146,332 votes for Pardee and 143,783 votes for Lane. Less than 3,000 votes separated the two major party candidates. Pardee had received 48.1% of the votes, Lane 47.3%. The 9,592 votes received by the Socialist candidate Gideon Brower and the 4,636 ballots cast for the Prohibitionist Thomas Kanouse far outnumbered the difference between Pardee and Lane.

Perhaps the men of California (it would be another 12 years before



From the collections of the Pardee Home Museum

George Pardee hands his ballot to former mayor R. W. Thomas on Nov. 4, 1902, at the polling place located at Twelfth and Market Streets.

women were allowed to vote for governor) were having a difficult time deciding between two candidates who appear, in retrospect, to be among the best qualified, even distinguished, men to ever run for the office. It was an enviable choice for the voters. Both men had enjoyed productive and varied careers before the 1902 campaign, and both contributed mightily to the political life of their state and nation

long after this campaign. Pardee became an important figure within the progressive wing of the Republican Party, and Lane, likewise, became an influential progressive Democrat. In fact, although Pardee won the election and became an effective and important governor, it was Lane who achieved greater political prominence nationwide in

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From the collections of the Pardee Home Museum

George Pardee addresses labor workers in San Francisco prior to election. Prominently displayed in his coat pocket is the *Examiner* newspaper: Pardee wanted the men to know that William Randolph Hearst's pro-labor paper, which typically backed Democrats, was endorsing him.

the years following the election.

As the 1902 election season approached, the Republican party of California was deeply divided between opponents and supporters of the sitting governor, Henry Gage (see info about Gage on page 10). Those opposed to Gage were determined to end the dominance of the Southern Pacific Railroad over their party, as well as the political life of Sacramento and economic progress of the state. George Pardee was known locally and statewide as a reformist, anti-machine Republican, who had battled both the Southern Pacific and the Contra Costa Water Co. before, while, and after being mayor of Oakland, but "he was nevertheless more willing than [other] members of his faction to compromise with Southern Pacific interests in party and government matters," according to the historian Edward Staniford. For example, Pardee had formed a personal alliance with Victor Metcalf, a powerful Oakland Republican supported by the rail-

road, during Pardee's earlier, unsuccessful try for the governor's seat in 1898.

In 1902, following months of negotiations, the "machine" and "anti-machine" factions within the Alameda County party settled their differences and drew up a ticket naming Pardee for governor and Metcalf for U.S. Congressman. In July, Pardee and Metcalf announced their peace pact, thus ending a decade of factional struggle within the county party. As the August primaries approached, Pardee appointed Charles Spear (see related article on page 4) and Charles Snook, his personal attorney and former district attorney of Alameda County, as his two campaign managers. John A. Britton, the taciturn president of the Oakland Gas Company (and later president of PG&E) was Pardee's chief fundraiser. His initial press support came from the *Oakland Tribune*, the *Oakland Enquirer*, and the *Pasadena News*.

Under a Republican Party com-

pact, the gubernatorial nomination would alternate every four years between candidates from northern California and those from southern California. 1902 was northern California's turn, and Pardee's chief rivals for the anti-machine vote were a prominent San Benito County rancher, Thomas Flint, Jr., the president *pro tem* of the State Senate since 1895 and a highly regarded reform leader, and E.B. Edson, a perennial candidate for governor from Siskiyou County. Flint enjoyed enthusiastic support from both the *Los Angeles Times* and the *San Francisco Call*, two newspapers which, along with the *San Francisco Chronicle*, launched a major muck-raking campaign against Gage in the summer of that year, alleging widespread corruption among high-level gubernatorial appointees.

The first "open skirmish" of the campaign occurred in August, when 830 delegates to the state Republican convention were chosen in county and district primaries. It was not an auspicious start for Pardee. Gage won 269 delegates, mainly from San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Sacramento, where the Southern Pacific was the strongest; Flint scored 230 delegates, mainly from southern California; Pardee won 169, including 71 from Alameda County; and Edson had 54, mainly from the remote northernmost counties of the state, with 108 unpledged delegates holding the balance of power at the upcoming convention.

Flint, Pardee, and Edson met in a series of conferences to organize a "Defeat Gage" campaign, and the three agreed to combine their votes to elect Lieutenant Governor Jacob Neff as temporary chairman of the convention and then to unite their forces behind the strongest candidate among them after the first bal-

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