

# Albert L. Reeves

Judge  
1873-1971

by Nancy J. Hulston

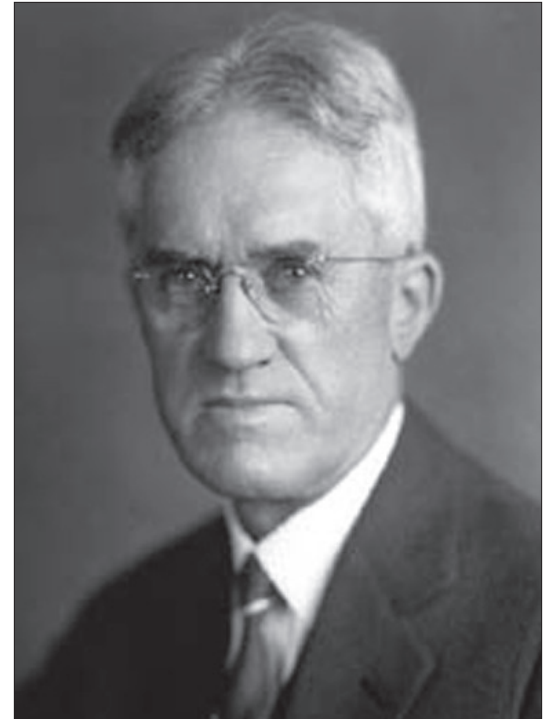
Judge Albert L. Reeves despised Tom Pendergast and his Democratic machine. He felt that Pendergast corrupted the young men of Kansas City, especially those from the heavily Italian North End. Reeves particularly disdained the machine's underhanded tactics involving voting fraud and eventually brought an end to Pendergast's control of the ballot box.

Reeves was born on a farm near Steelville, Missouri, in 1873. He graduated from Steelville College in 1895 and then studied law in a Union, Missouri, attorney's office. He was admitted to the Missouri bar in 1899. Reeves moved to Kansas City in 1911. He opened a law office and in 1918 ran unsuccessfully as a Republican for Congress. From 1921 to 1923 he served an appointment as Commissioner of the Missouri Supreme Court. In 1923 he was appointed judge of the United States District Court for the Western District of Missouri.

The primary and general election of 1936 were so corrupt that ballots were counted for nearly 80,000 "ghost voters," people who were not eligible to vote or who did not exist. Pendergast-machine thugs surrounded many polling places and told people how to vote. The situation at the polls was so blatantly out of hand that it was an embarrassment on a national level. Both Joe Shannon and Tom Pendergast denied any responsibility. Reeves, however, believed that Pendergast was to blame.

During 1936 and 1937, Reeves challenged the Pendergast machine over voting frauds. A grand jury, convened by Reeves, investigated ballot stuffing and "ghost voting" in Kansas City. Eventually, 259 Pendergast supporters were convicted by federal juries for conspiracy involving voting fraud. Over 60,000 names that were illegally registered as voters, "the sick, the dying, and the dead," were taken off the lists. This was the beginning of the end for the Pendergast machine.

Judge Reeves took senior status and retired in 1954. He worked as a visiting judge in a number of states until 1964. He died at his residence in Dunedin, Florida, in 1971 at the age of 97.



## Sources

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