

James Alexander Reed

Politician

1861-1944

by Nancy J. Hulston

James A. Reed, political ally of Thomas Pendergast, served as a Kansas City mayor, senator, and presidential candidate. Born in 1861 in Ohio, Reed grew up in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and studied law at Coe College. Reed arrived in Kansas City in 1887 and began a law practice.

In 1896 Reed was appointed county counselor and in 1898 was elected prosecuting attorney for Jackson County. He caught the eye of the Pendergast brothers, Jim and Tom, and in 1900 Reed received the democratic nomination for mayor and won the election. His election as mayor marked the rise of alderman Jim Pendergast as a political force in Kansas City.

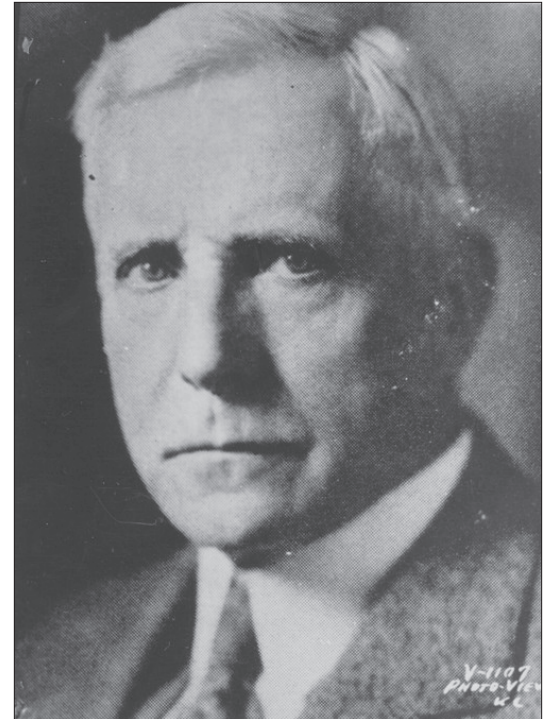
Reed served as mayor from 1900 to 1903. His accomplishments included rebuilding the Convention Hall after it burned, the establishment of a \$15 million relief fund for the victims of the 1903 flood, and the acceptance of land from Colonel Thomas H. Swope for the building of Hospital Hill. Reed opposed building parks and boulevards, considering them extravagant luxuries, and fired A. R. Meyer, "Father of the Park System," from the park board.

In 1910, Reed prosecuted Dr. Bennett Clark Hyde in the murder of Thomas H. Swope, in one of Kansas City's most sensational trials.

Reed was actively involved with local and state Democratic politics throughout his career. He served as a United States senator from Missouri for three terms, from 1910 to 1929. While serving in the senate, he wrote dozens of letters in support of applicants seeking public employment from Thomas J. Pendergast.

Reed was a candidate for the presidency in 1924 and 1928. In 1932 he nearly won the nomination over Franklin D. Roosevelt. During Roosevelt's terms as President, Reed strongly opposed the New Deal.

With his political career over, Reed resumed his law practice in Kansas City. His wife, Lura Olmstead Reed, died in 1932. That



same year he successfully prosecuted the kidnapers of Nell Donnelly, founder and president of Donnelly Garment Company. He married Donnelly in 1933. James A. Reed died at his summer home in Fairview, Michigan, on September 8, 1944.

Sources

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