

Guy Brasfield Park

Missouri Governor
1872-1946

by Nancy J. Hulston

Guy B. Park was a rather ineffectual governor bound to Thomas Pendergast's political machine by gratitude for putting him in office.

Born in Platte City, Missouri, in 1872, Park received his law degree from the University of Missouri in 1896. He began his law practice in Platte City in 1899. Park served as city attorney for Platte City and later as prosecuting attorney for Platte County. In 1922, he was a member of the Constitutional Convention. He resigned that position in 1923 when he was elected judge of the circuit court, Fifth Missouri Circuit.

In 1932, Francis M. Wilson, the Pendergast organization's candidate for governor, died unexpectedly. The machine immediately swung its endorsement to Park, a longtime friend and colleague of Wilson. He accepted the nomination, won the gubernatorial election of 1933, and spent four years in the governor's mansion in Jefferson City.

During Park's administration, millions of federal dollars flowed into Missouri. Through the WPA, federal relief and emergency expenditures became available for road and bridge building. Recreational facilities and state parks were enlarged and improved. Through Park's connection with the Pendergast organization, a great deal of federal money was diverted to Kansas City resulting in high dollar contracts going to Pendergast-machine owned businesses.

Towards the end of Park's term, several issues darkened his incumbency. A statewide fire insurance scandal, involving a portion of rates rolling back to the state insurance department, caused negative publicity for Park. The state superintendent of insurance, R. E. O'Malley, was widely known as a Pendergast crony. This case eventually led to the fall of Thomas J. Pendergast. Another concern regarding Park was his refusal, as chief executive of the state, to stop the voting fraud in Kansas City elections.



At the end of his term as governor, Park established a law office in Kansas City. He died on October 1, 1946.

Sources

Kansas City Star, 30 Oct.1932; 4 Dec.1936.

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Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997.

Official Manual for the State of Missouri. Jefferson City: State of Missouri, 1963-1964.

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