

= Lazarus W. Powell =

Lazarus Whitehead Powell (October 6 , 1812 ? July 3 , 1867) was the 19th Governor of Kentucky , serving from 1851 to 1855 . He was later elected to represent Kentucky in the U.S. Senate from 1859 to 1865 .

The reforms enacted during Powell 's term as governor gave Kentucky one of the top educational systems in the antebellum South . He also improved Kentucky 's transportation system and vetoed legislation that he felt would have created an overabundance of banks in the Commonwealth . Powell 's election as governor marked the end of Whig dominance in Kentucky . Powell 's predecessor , John J. Crittenden , was the last governor elected from the party of the Commonwealth 's favorite son , Henry Clay .

Following his term as governor , Powell was elected to the U.S. Senate . Before he could assume office , President James Buchanan dispatched Powell and Major Benjamin McCulloch to Utah to ease tensions with Brigham Young and the Mormons . Powell assumed his Senate seat on his return from Utah , just prior to the election of Abraham Lincoln as president . Powell became an outspoken critic of Lincoln 's administration , so much so that the Kentucky General Assembly asked for his resignation and some of his fellow senators tried to have him expelled from the body . Both groups later renounced their actions .

Powell died at his home near Henderson , Kentucky shortly following a failed bid to return to the Senate in 1867 .

= = Early life = =

Powell was born on October 6 , 1812 near Henderson , Kentucky , the third son of Lazarus and Ann McMahon [a] Powell . He attended the common schools of Henderson , and was tutored by George Gayle . He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Saint Joseph College in Bardstown , Kentucky in 1833 , and began studying law under John Rowan . He then enrolled in the Transylvania University School of Law , studying under Justice George Robertson and Judge Daniel Mayes . He was admitted to the bar in 1835 , and partnered with Archibald Dixon to start a law practice in Henderson . The two remained partners until 1839 .

On November 8 , 1837 , Powell married Harriet Ann Jennings . The couple had three sons [b] before Jennings died on July 30 , 1846 .

= = Political career = =

A Democrat in a Whig district , Powell 's political career began with an 1836 bid for a seat in the Kentucky House of Representatives . He campaigned vigorously while his opponent , John G. Holloway , relied largely on his party affiliation to carry the election . This proved a critical misstep for Holloway , as Powell secured the surprise victory . Holloway apparently learned from his mistake . Upon the completion of Powell 's term in 1838 , Holloway challenged Powell again , and defeated him by a considerable majority . Six year later , Powell was chosen as a presidential elector on the Democratic ticket , supporting James K. Polk .

= = = Governor of Kentucky = = =

In 1848 , Kentucky Democrats nominated Linn Boyd for governor , but Boyd declined the nomination . Powell was chosen to replace Boyd on the ticket , largely due to the influence of James Guthrie . The Whig party nominated Senator John J. Crittenden , and the race was complicated by former Vice President Richard Mentor Johnson 's announcement that he would run as an independent Democratic candidate . Knowing the Democrats ' chances were dimmed by having two candidates in the race , Powell arranged a meeting with Johnson , following which the latter withdrew his candidacy and pledged his support to Powell . Nevertheless , Crittenden won the election .

In the gubernatorial election of 1851 , Powell was once again the Democratic Party nominee . The Whigs nominated Powell 's friend and law partner , Archibald Dixon . Powell and Dixon traveled the state together , eating at the same taverns , speaking from the same platforms , and generally showing cordiality and friendliness that was rare in Kentucky politics in those days . Powell 's margin of victory in the general election was a thin 850 votes , while Whig candidate John P. Thompson defeated the Democratic nominee for lieutenant governor , Robert Wickliffe , by several thousand votes . A third candidate for governor , abolitionist Cassius M. Clay , received 3 @, @ 621 votes . Powell was the first Democrat elected to the office in almost twenty years . (John L. Helm had ascended to the governorship on Crittenden 's resignation .)

The Whigs also maintained control of the General Assembly , and although Governor Powell was largely able to cooperate with his political opponents , some clashes did occur . As a result of the 1850 census , the General Assembly re @-@ apportioned the state into ten congressional districts . Powell vetoed the redistricting , noting that the districts had been gerrymandered to give the fading Whig party control over the state delegation . The legislature overrode the veto . The governor was successful , however , in vetoing legislation that he felt would have created an overabundance of banks in the Commonwealth .

Powell implemented the use of the state 's sinking fund to pay interest on school bonds , a measure which had passed over Governor Helm 's veto , but Helm refused to carry out . In 1855 , Kentucky 's voters passed by landslide a measure to raise the school tax from two cents per hundred dollars of taxable property to five cents per hundred dollars . The measure enjoyed the support of both Governor Powell and superintendent of public schools Robert Jefferson Breckinridge . Under the leadership of Powell and Breckinridge , Kentucky 's school system became among the strongest in the antebellum South .

Among Powell 's other successes as governor was his successful lobbying of the legislature to conduct a geological survey in 1854 . He also encouraged private investment in transportation in the state . During his term , the state went from having 78 miles (126 km) of railroad track in operation to having 242 miles (389 km) in operation .

= = = United States Senator = = =

In January 1858 , Powell was elected to the United States Senate . In April of that year , President James Buchanan appointed Powell and Major Benjamin McCulloch commissioners to negotiate settlements with the Mormons in Utah . On arriving in Utah , Powell and McCulloch issued a proclamation by President Buchanan offering clemency to Mormons who agreed to submit to Federal authority . The offer was accepted , and violence was averted .

Senator Powell favored Kentucky 's neutrality policy during the Civil War , but nationally , the conflict put him in a tenuous political situation . On one hand , he favored a strong national government and a strict interpretation of the U.S. Constitution . On the other hand , he was an opponent of coercion , and due to Kentucky 's proximity to the Southern states , maintained a more sympathetic view of the southern cause than legislators from more northern states . During his term as governor , Powell had been critical of Northern states that refused to abide by the Fugitive Slave Act .

In 1861 , Senator Powell vigorously condemned President Lincoln 's decision to suspend the writ of habeas corpus . In 1862 , he denounced the arrest of some citizens of Delaware ? officially , the arrests were called " resolutions of inquiry " ? as a violation of constitutional rights . These stances led to calls for his resignation by the Kentucky General Assembly in 1861 , and some of his colleagues , led by Kentucky 's other senator , Garrett Davis , unsuccessfully attempted to have him expelled from the Senate . Before the end of the war , both the General Assembly and Davis admitted being wrong in their attempts to remove him .

Following his successful defense against calls for his removal , Powell continued speaking against what he saw as violations of constitutional rights . In 1864 , he condemned General Order No. 11 , an edict of Ulysses S. Grant that barred Jews from the Department of Tennessee , which included regions of Kentucky . In the same speech , he rebuked federal military interference with the

elections in Kentucky . In 1864 , he opposed a constitutional amendment aimed at freeing the slaves .

= = Later life and legacy = =

Following his term in the Senate , he returned to Henderson and resumed his law practice . He was a delegate to the Union National Convention in 1866 . In 1867 , he was again nominated to the U.S. Senate , but after several ballots over several months , the General Assembly had not elected him . Powell believed that many of the legislators had been elected as a result of election interference by Northern forces , and that their intent was to prevent Kentucky from electing a senator at all , diminishing her influence nationally . In light of this belief , he urged the Democrats to withdraw his name and nominate someone more palatable to Union sympathizers . This they did , putting forth the name of Garrett Davis , who was subsequently elected .

Powell died in his home on July 3 , 1867 . The cause of death was apoplexy , apparently the result of the toll years of rheumatism had exacted on his nervous system . He is buried at the Fernwood Cemetery in Henderson , Kentucky . The state erected a 22 @-@ foot (6 @.@ 7 m) high marble monument over his grave in 1870 . Powell County , Kentucky , is named in honor of Governor Powell .