

= John Breathitt =

John Breathitt ( September 9 , 1786 ? February 21 , 1834 ) was the 11th Governor of Kentucky . He was the first Democrat to hold this office and was the second Kentucky governor to die in office . Shortly after his death , Breathitt County , Kentucky was created and named in his honor .

Early in life , Breathitt was appointed a deputy surveyor in Illinois Territory . On his return to Kentucky , he taught at a country school , and through wise investments , amassed enough wealth to sustain him while he studied law with Judge Caleb Wallace . In 1811 , he was elected to the first of several terms in the Kentucky House of Representatives . He was the Democratic nominee for lieutenant governor in 1828 . Although his running mate William T. Barry lost the office of governor to Thomas Metcalfe , Breathitt defeated his opponent for lieutenant governor .

During his term as lieutenant governor , Breathitt was one of several proposed candidates to succeed John Rowan in the United States Senate , but the General Assembly deadlocked over the appointment and the seat went unfilled until the Assembly 's next term . In the next gubernatorial election in 1832 , Breathitt was the Democratic nominee for governor . Again , Breathitt won , but James Turner Morehead , the Whig candidate for lieutenant governor , defeated Breathitt 's running mate . Initially , Breathitt enjoyed popularity for his public condemnation of John C. Calhoun 's doctrine of nullification , but he did not fare well in state politics because the Whigs controlled the legislature . He died in office of tuberculosis on February 21 , 1834 .

= = Early life = =

John Breathitt was born near New London , Henry County , Virginia on September 9 , 1786 . He was the eldest of five sons and four daughters born to William and Elizabeth ( Whitsett ) Breathitt . William Breathitt immigrated to Maryland from Scotland , then settled in Virginia . John Breathitt 's brother , George , became a private secretary to President Andrew Jackson . Another brother , James , became Commonwealth 's Attorney for the state of Kentucky .

Breathitt was educated at home and in the public schools of his native state . His family moved to Logan County , Kentucky in 1800 , and he continued his education there . In early adulthood , he was appointed as a deputy surveyor in Illinois Territory . He then returned to Kentucky to teach in a country school . He invested his income in land purchases , and shortly amassed enough wealth to sustain him for a few years . Financially stable , he resolved to read law under Judge Caleb Wallace . He was admitted to the bar of Russellville , Kentucky in 1810 and opened his practice there .

In 1812 , Breathitt married Caroline Whitaker of Logan County . The couple had a son and a daughter . When his first wife died , he married Susan M. Harris of Chesterfield County , Virginia . Breathitt had another daughter by his second wife . Though Breathitt himself died at age 47 , he survived both of his wives .

= = Political career = =

Breathitt was elected to represent Logan County in the Kentucky House of Representatives in 1811 , and was re-elected every year until 1815 . In the gubernatorial election of 1828 , the Democrats chose William T. Barry as their candidate for governor . Initially , they offered the nomination for lieutenant governor to Judge John P. Oldham , but Oldham declined , and Breathitt was chosen as his replacement . Barry lost the governorship to National Republican Thomas Metcalfe , but Breathitt defeated Metcalfe 's running mate Joseph R. Underwood by more than 10,000 votes .

As lieutenant governor , Breathitt promoted the creation of public schools in the state . On December 31 , 1829 , he was elected president of the Kentucky Educational Society whose stated mission was to " promote improvement and diffusion of popular education by the circulation of information , by enlisting the pulpit and the press , by procuring the delivery of popular addresses on the subject on the 4th day of July , and in different neighborhoods , and by other means that may be found practicable . " In 1833 , he became president of the Kentucky Common School Society .

In 1831 , Breathitt was one of several candidates put before the General Assembly to succeed John Rowan in the United States Senate . He received 66 of 137 votes , 3 votes short of a majority . Other unsuccessful nominees included John J. Crittenden ( 68 votes ) , Richard Mentor Johnson ( 64 votes ) , and Charles A. Wickliffe ( 49 votes ) . After 15 ballots , the Assembly still had not chosen a nominee , and postponed the matter until the next session . At that session , Henry Clay was chosen to fill the seat .

= = = Governor of Kentucky = = =

In 1832 , the Democrats selected Breathitt and Benjamin Taylor as their candidates for governor and lieutenant governor , respectively . They faced a Whig ( formerly National Republican ) ticket of Richard Aylett Buckner and James Turner Morehead . Buckner was hurt by his extremely religious ideals , including opposition to handling mail on Sunday , and failed to garner the support of some of his own party 's newspapers . Breathitt defeated Buckner by a small margin , but Morehead defeated Taylor , Breathitt 's little @-@ known running mate . Breathitt 's election marked the first time a Democrat had ascended to the governorship of Kentucky . The election was marred by fraud , however . In Oldham County , the number of votes tallied represented 162 @.@ 9 % of the eligible voters in the county , and these votes broke two @-@ to @-@ one in favor of Breathitt . Most Kentuckians were more concerned about the upcoming presidential election , hoping Whig and native son Henry Clay would defeat Democrat Andrew Jackson . Because of this , most of the other state offices went to Whig candidates .

Early in his term , Breathitt won favor from both Whigs and Democrats by opposing South Carolina 's actions during the Nullification Crisis . Following Breathitt 's lead , the state legislature passed resolutions condemning the doctrine of nullification on February 2 , 1833 . This action was particularly significant because John C. Calhoun 's justification for nullification was largely based on the 1799 Kentucky Resolutions .

Breathitt did not fare as well in state politics . He ardently supported Jacksonian principles , and wielded his veto against bills critical of President Jackson 's land policy . He supported Jackson 's desire to dissolve the Second Bank of the United States . Instead , he favored opening a number of state banks , but faced with a Whig majority in the legislature , he succeeded only in chartering the Louisville Bank of Kentucky . He also favored completion of the Lexington and Ohio Railroad , and supported a \$ 300 @,@ 000 loan from the state Board of Internal Improvements for that purpose . In 1833 , a loan for half the amount was approved , and the railroad was not completed until 1851 . Breathitt was also part of the temperance movement in Kentucky . In an 1832 address , he blamed consumption of alcohol for the high murder rate in the state . When the Kentucky Legislative Temperance Society was formed at a meeting in the state house on January 13 , 1834 , Breathitt was chosen as its president and Lieutenant Governor Morehead served as one of five vice @-@ presidents .

Breathitt died of tuberculosis in the governor 's mansion in Frankfort on February 21 , 1834 . He was the second sitting governor of Kentucky to die in office . Originally buried in the Breathitt family cemetery , he was later re @-@ interred at Maple Grove Cemetery in Russellville . Breathitt County , Kentucky was formed in 1839 and named in his honor . On March 5 , 1872 , the Kentucky General Assembly resolved to erect a monument over Breathitt 's grave in Russellville .