

= Alton B. Parker =

Alton Brooks Parker (May 14 , 1852 ? May 10 , 1926) was an American judge , best known as the Conservative Democrat who lost the presidential election of 1904 to incumbent Theodore Roosevelt in a landslide .

A native of upstate New York , Parker practiced law in Kingston , New York , before being appointed to the New York Supreme Court and elected to the New York Court of Appeals ; he served as Chief Judge of the latter from 1898 to 1904 , when he resigned to run for president . In 1904 , he defeated liberal publisher William Randolph Hearst for the Democratic Party nomination for President of the United States . In the general election , Parker opposed popular incumbent Republican President Theodore Roosevelt . After a disorganized and ineffective campaign , Parker was defeated by 336 electoral votes to 140 , carrying only the traditionally Democratic Solid South . He then returned to practicing law . He managed John A. Dix 's successful 1910 campaign for Governor of New York and served as prosecution counsel for the 1913 impeachment of Dix 's successor , Governor William Sulzer .

= = Early life = =

Parker was born in Cortland , New York , to John Brooks Parker , a farmer , and Harriet F. Stratton . Both of his parents were well educated and encouraged his reading from an early age . At the age of 12 or 13 , Parker watched his father serve as a juror and was so fascinated by the proceedings that he resolved to become a lawyer . However , he trained initially as a teacher and taught in Binghamton . There he became engaged to Mary Louise Schoonmaker , the daughter of a man who owned property near his school . Parker married Schoonmaker in 1872 and became a clerk at Schoonmaker & Hardenburgh , a legal firm at which one of her relatives was the senior partner . He then enrolled at Albany Law School . After graduating with an LL.B. degree in 1873 , he practiced law in Kingston until 1878 as the senior partner of the firm Parker & Kenyon .

Parker also became active with the Democratic Party and was an early supporter of future New York governor and US President Grover Cleveland . He served as a delegate to the 1884 Democratic National Convention , at which Cleveland was named the party 's presidential nominee ; Cleveland went on to narrowly defeat Republican James G. Blaine in the fall election . During this time , Parker also became a protege of David B. Hill , managing Hill 's 1884 gubernatorial campaign ; Hill won in a landslide .

= = Judicial career = =

After his election , Hill appointed Parker to fill an 1885 vacancy on the New York Supreme Court created by the death of Justice Theodore R. Westbrook . In 1886 , Parker was elected to his own fourteen @-@ year term in the seat . Three years later , Parker became an appellate judge when Hill appointed him to the newly formed Second Department of the Appellate Division . In November 1897 , Parker successfully ran for the post of Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals , defeating Republican William James Wallace .

As a judge , Parker was notable for independently researching each case that he heard . He was generally considered to be pro @-@ labor and was an active supporter of social reform legislation , for example upholding a maximum @-@ hours law as constitutional . In the 1902 decision *Roberson v. Rochester Folding Box Co* , Parker found against a woman whose face had been used in advertisements without her permission , ruling that this use did not violate her common law privacy rights . The decision was unpopular in the press and led to the passage of a privacy law by the New York State Legislature the following year . In the same year , Parker upheld the death sentence given to convicted murderer Martha Place , who became the first woman to be executed by electric chair .

During his time as Chief Judge , Parker and his wife sold their Kingston home and bought an estate in Esopus on the Hudson River , calling the house " Rosemount " . The couple had one daughter

and one son , the latter of whom died young of tetanus .

= = Presidential nomination = =

As the 1904 presidential election approached , the Democrats began to search for a nominee to oppose popular incumbent Republican president Theodore Roosevelt , and Parker 's name arose as a possible candidate . Roosevelt 's Secretary of War Elihu Root said of Parker that he " has never opened his mouth on any national question " , but Roosevelt feared that the man 's neutrality would prove a political advantage , writing that " the neutral @-@ tinted individual is very apt to win against the man of pronounced views and active life " .

The 1904 Democratic National Convention was held in July in St. Louis , Missouri , then also hosting the 1904 World 's Fair and the 1904 Summer Olympics . Parker 's mentor David B. Hill ? having attempted and failed to capture the nomination himself at the 1892 convention ? now led the campaign for his protege 's nomination . William Jennings Bryan , who had been nominated but defeated by William McKinley in both 1896 and 1900 , was no longer considered by delegates to be a viable alternative . Radicals in the party supported publisher William Randolph Hearst but lacked sufficient numbers to secure the nomination due to opposition from Bryan and Tammany Hall , a powerful New York political machine . Small clusters of delegates pledged support to other candidates , including Missouri Senator Francis Cockrell ; Richard Olney , Grover Cleveland 's Secretary of State ; Edward C. Wall , a former Wisconsin State Representative ; and George Gray , a former Senator from Delaware . Other delegates spoke of nominating Cleveland , who had already served two nonconsecutive terms , but Cleveland was no longer popular outside the party or even within it , due to his rift with Bryan .

Parker 's long service on the bench proved to be an advantage in his nomination , as he had avoided taking stands on issues that divided the party , particularly that of currency standards . Hill and other Parker supporters remained deliberately silent on their candidate 's beliefs . By the time the convention cast their votes , it was clear that no candidate but Parker could unify the party , and he was selected on the first ballot . Henry G. Davis , an elderly West Virginia millionaire and former senator , was selected as the vice presidential candidate in the hope that he would partially finance Parker 's campaign .

The convention was riven by debate over whether to include a free silver plank in the campaign 's platform , opposing the gold standard and calling for the government to mint large numbers of silver dollars . The " free silver " movement , a key plank for the party in 1896 and 1900 , was popular among indebted Western farmers who felt that inflation would help them repay their debts . Business interests , in contrast , supported the lower inflation of the gold standard . Bryan , famous for his 1896 " Cross of Gold " speech opposing the gold standard , fought bitterly to avoid the inclusion of the gold standard in the party platform in 1904 . Ultimately the convention agreed not to include a plank on the subject .

However , seeking to win the support of the Eastern " sound money " faction , Parker sent a telegram to the convention immediately upon hearing news of his nomination that he considered the gold standard " firmly and irrevocably established " and would decline the nomination if he could not state this in his campaign . The telegram sparked a new debate and fresh opposition from Bryan , but the convention eventually replied to Parker that he was free to speak on the issue as he liked . National support for Parker began to rise , and Roosevelt praised his opponent 's telegram in private as " bold and skillful " and " most adroit " .

= = Campaign = =

After receiving the nomination , Parker resigned from the bench . On August 10 , he was formally visited at Rosemount by a delegation of party elders to inform him of his nomination . Parker then delivered a speech criticizing Roosevelt for his administration 's involvement in Turkish and Moroccan affairs and having failed to give a date on which the Philippines would become independent of American control ; the speech was considered even by supporters to be impersonal

and uninspiring . Historian Lewis L. Gould described the speech as a " fiasco " for Parker from which the candidate did not recover . After this initial speech , Parker retreated into a strategy of silence again , avoiding comment on all major issues .

Parker 's campaign soon proved to be poorly run as well . Parker and his advisors opted for a front porch campaign , in which delegations would be brought to Rosemount to see Parker speak on the model of McKinley 's successful 1896 campaign . However , due to Esopus ' remote location and the campaign 's inefficient use of funds to bring in delegates , Parker received few visitors . Rather than introducing issues that would differentiate the two parties , the Democrats preferred to emphasize Roosevelt 's character , portraying him as dangerously unstable . Parker 's campaign also failed to reach out to traditional Democratic voting blocs such as Irish Catholic immigrants . In contrast , Roosevelt 's campaign , headed by George Cortelyou , organized committees to appeal specifically to demographics including Jewish , black , and German @-@ American voters . John Hay , Roosevelt 's Secretary of State , wrote of Parker 's poor showing to Henry Adams , calling it " the most absurd political campaign of our time " .

A month before the election , Parker became aware of the large amount of corporate donations Cortelyou had solicited for the Roosevelt campaign , and made " Cortelyouism " a theme of his speeches , accusing the president of being insincere in previous trust busting efforts . In late October , he also went on a speaking tour in the key states of New York and New Jersey , in which he reiterated the president 's " shameless exhibition of a willingness to make compromise with dignity " . Roosevelt , enraged , released a statement calling Parker 's criticisms " monstrous " and " slanderous " .

Parker 's attacks came too late to turn the election , however . On November 8 , Roosevelt won in a landslide of 7 @,@ 630 @,@ 457 votes to Parker 's 5 @,@ 083 @,@ 880 . Roosevelt carried every northern and western state , including Missouri , for a total of 336 electoral votes ; Parker carried only the traditionally Democratic Solid South , accumulating 140 electoral votes . Parker telegraphed his congratulations to Roosevelt that night and returned to private life .

In Irving Stone 's 1943 book *They Also Ran* about defeated presidential candidates , the author stated that Parker was the only defeated presidential candidate in history never to have a biography written about him . Stone theorized that Parker would have been an effective president and the 1904 election was one of a few in American history in which voters had two first @-@ rate candidates to choose from . Stone professed that Americans liked Roosevelt more because of his colorful style .

= = Later life = =

After the election , Parker resumed practicing law and served as the president of the American Bar Association from 1906 to 1907 . He represented organized labor in several cases , most notably in *Loewe v. Lawlor* , popularly known as the " Danbury Hatters ' case " . In the case , the fur hat manufacturer D. E. Loewe & Company had attempted to enforce an open shop policy ; when unions had subsequently boycotted the company , it sued the United Hatters of North America for violation of the Sherman Antitrust Act . The conservative US Supreme Court found for Loewe by ruling that the union had been acting in restraint of interstate commerce .

Parker later re @-@ entered politics , managing John Alden Dix 's successful 1910 gubernatorial campaign and delivering the keynote address of the 1912 Democratic National Convention , which nominated Woodrow Wilson for President . In 1913 , he was counsel for the managers of the trial leading to the impeachment of Dix 's successor as governor , William Sulzer .

Parker 's wife , Mary , died in 1917 . He remarried in 1923 to Amelia Day Campbell . On May 10 , 1926 , only a few days after recovering from bronchial pneumonia , Parker died from a heart attack while riding in his car through New York City 's Central Park , four days before his 74th birthday . He was buried in Wiltwyck Cemetery in Kingston .