

= Preston Leslie =

Preston Hopkins Leslie (March 8 , 1819 ? February 7 , 1907) was the 26th Governor of Kentucky from 1871 to 1875 and territorial governor of Montana from 1887 to 1889 . He ascended to the office of governor by three different means . First , he succeeded Kentucky governor John W. Stevenson upon the latter 's resignation to accept a seat in the United States Senate in 1871 . Later that year , he was elected to a full term as governor , defeating John Marshall Harlan in the general election . Finally , he was appointed territorial governor by President Grover Cleveland .

Leslie was a Confederate sympathizer during the Civil War , but began to adopt a more progressive position during his gubernatorial campaign against Harlan . Though he opposed ratification of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments , he used his influence as governor to effect passage of laws admitting the testimony of blacks in court and providing for an educational system for recently freed slaves . He also helped quell violence perpetrated by the Ku Klux Klan in many areas of the state .

As territorial governor of Montana , Leslie quickly drew the ire of the press for his pro @-@ temperance position . The territory 's political machinery also turned against him , and he was removed from office by President Benjamin Harrison . When Grover Cleveland succeeded Harrison for a second term in office , he appointed Leslie district attorney for Montana . Leslie continued to practice law well into his eighties , and was being considered for a district court judgeship in Montana when he fell ill with pneumonia and died on February 7 , 1907 , at the age of 87 .

= = Early life = =

Preston Leslie was born in Clinton County , Kentucky (then a part of Wayne County) , on March 8 , 1819 . He was the second son of Vachel H. and Sarah Hopkins Leslie . He was educated in the public schools , then studied law under Judge Rice Maxey . He worked with his father on the family farm until 1835 , and supported himself by doing odd jobs including driving a stagecoach , running a ferry , and being store clerk . Leslie was admitted to the bar on October 10 , 1840 , and served as the deputy clerk of the Clinton County courts . In 1841 , he relocated to Tompkinsville , Kentucky , where he worked as a farmer . He became county attorney of Monroe County in 1842 .

On November 11 , 1841 , Leslie married Louisa Black ; they had seven children . Louisa died on August 9 , 1858 . Leslie married the widowed Mary Maupin Kuykendall on November 17 , 1859 , fathering three more children . Mary Leslie died September 3 , 1900 .

= = Political career = =

Leslie began his political career by being elected as a Whig to the Kentucky House of Representatives in 1844 . He was defeated for a seat in the state Senate in 1846 by a single vote . He continued serving in the House until 1850 , when he won election to the Senate representing Monroe and Barren counties . He then served in the Senate until 1855 . In the 1850s , the Whig Party gradually faded in Kentucky , and Leslie became a Democrat . He declined nominations for a seats in the United States Congress and on the Kentucky Court of Appeals , preferring instead to work on his farm . In 1859 , he moved to Glasgow , Kentucky , in Barren County .

By 1861 , Leslie had built up a prosperous estate and added a plot of land in Texas to his holdings in Kentucky . In December of that year , he and his eldest son traveled to the property with 26 slaves and a large part of the family 's possessions . After establishing his household , Leslie returned to Kentucky and left the Texas estate in the care of his son .

Leslie 's feelings were mixed on the issues central to the Civil War . Known as a " strong Union man " prior to the war , his sympathies switched to the southern cause once the war began . Nevertheless , he believed the South should solve its differences with the North through diplomatic means , and did not favor the idea of secession . He kept a low political profile and refused military service for either side . He returned to the state Senate from 1867 to 1871 , serving as president of that body from 1869 to 1871 .

= = = Governor of Kentucky = = =

On February 13 , 1871 , Governor John W. Stevenson resigned his post to accept a seat in the U.S. Senate . Stevenson had ascended to the governorship on the death of John L. Helm , and had no lieutenant governor . As president of the Senate , Leslie was the ex @-@ officio lieutenant governor , and next in line to succeed Stevenson . A gubernatorial election was already scheduled later in 1871 , and Leslie was among several nominees put forward by the Democrats . Because of Leslie 's opposition to the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments , his candidacy was opposed by Henry Watterson , founder of the powerful Louisville Courier @-@ Journal . Despite this , Leslie emerged from a field of Democratic candidates that included future governors John Y. Brown and J. Proctor Knott and former Confederate governor Richard Hawes . John G. Carlisle was chosen as Leslie 's running mate , and was declared by one commentator to be " by odds , the ablest man on the ticket " . Leslie 's opposition to the Southern Railroad bill while serving in the state senate proved a liability with some voters in his own party . Because of his southern sympathies , he was also opposed by the more progressive " New Departure " wing of his party . Nevertheless , he enjoyed support from the Bourbon Democrats in the state , as well as the state 's tobacco interests and the Louisville and Nashville Railroad .

During the campaign , Leslie 's opponent Republican John Marshall Harlan was blasted as a " political weathercock " for having changed his stance on many issues . In one joint debate , Leslie quoted an antebellum speech wherein Harlan had called the Republican platform " revolutionary , and if carried out , would result in the destruction of our free government . " Harlan admitted his inconsistent stands , declaring that he would rather be right than consistent . Meanwhile , Leslie began moving closer to the " New Departure " wing of his party during the course of the campaign . Ultimately , Leslie 's supporters deemed him " sober , conservative , and safe " , and this perception enabled him to defeat Harlan by a considerable margin in the first election in which blacks were allowed to vote .

Leslie laid out an aggressive legislative agenda in his inaugural address to the General Assembly on September 5 , 1871 , but legislators were more concerned with passing the Southern Railroad bill that would create a connection between the railroads of Cincinnati , Ohio , and those of the Southern United States . The line would pass through central Kentucky , opening up trade to the region . It would be funded primarily by capital from Ohio , and would provide competition to the Louisville and Nashville Railroad 's monopoly in the state . Though Leslie wasn 't particularly supportive of the bill , he refused to veto it because of the potential economic benefits to the state . Leslie was also faced with the issue of post @-@ war violence by the Ku Klux Klan . The legislature had refused to pass a law against mob violence in 1871 . In his address to the legislature on December 6 , 1871 , Leslie endorsed legislation that made it illegal to write or post threatening notices and to band together and wear disguises . This proposal enjoyed favorable public opinion , and was passed during the legislature 's next session . With the railroad and violence issues resolved , Governor Leslie urged the legislature to improve the status of blacks in the state , including the creation of an educational system for blacks and the approval of the testimony of blacks in the state 's courts . He commissioned a new geological survey , appointing native Kentuckian Nathaniel Southgate Shaler to head the work . An advocate of the temperance movement , he secured additional regulations on the sale of liquor . Also during Leslie 's tenure , the penal system was improved .

Devout Baptists and teetotalers , Governor and Mrs. Leslie did not serve alcohol in the governor 's mansion and were given a silver service set at the expiration of his term by the Good Templars of Kentucky for their charity to the needy . Following his term in office , Leslie was elected to serve on the Glasgow circuit court , a position he held for six years , beginning in 1881 . He failed in a re @-@ election bid in 1886 by four votes .

= = = Governor of Montana = = =

In 1887 , President Grover Cleveland appointed Leslie to be the Territorial Governor of Montana .

Cleveland made the appointment on the recommendation of John Marshall Harlan , Leslie 's opponent in the Kentucky gubernatorial election of 1871 , who was now serving as an Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court . Leslie soon ran afoul of the local press , who labeled him the " Coldwater Governor " for his stands in favor of temperance . The press 's opinion of him further dimmed when he pardoned a prostitute convicted of grand larceny because the penitentiary was not equipped to accommodate women . He urged the territorial legislature to enact fiscal reforms and improve facilities for the insane and the incarcerated , but he was no match for the political machinery in Montana Territory . His 1889 pocket veto of an appointment bill supported by the legislature was the final straw ; under pressure from Republicans , President Benjamin Harrison replaced Leslie as territorial governor .

Meanwhile , in Kentucky , the state treasurer , " Honest Dick " Tate , had absconded with nearly \$ 250 @,@ 000 of the state 's money in 1888 . During the investigation that followed , it was discovered that Leslie , along with several other state officials , had procured personal loans from the state treasury through Tate .

= = Later life and death = =

Following his removal from office , Leslie opened a legal practice in Helena , Montana , partnering with A. J. Craven . President Cleveland in his second term appointed Leslie U.S. district attorney of Montana . He served from 1894 to 1898 .

During his final years practicing law in Helena , Leslie gained widespread acclaim and served as president of the Montana State Bar Association . On a return visit to Kentucky in 1906 , he addressed the legislature , noting how he had helped the state adjust to the " new order " following the Civil War . Montana governor Joseph Toole was circulating a petition to have Leslie named a district court judge when Leslie fell ill with pneumonia . He died February 7 , 1907 and was buried at Forestvale Cemetery in Helena .

= = Memorials = =

Leslie County , Kentucky , was formed in 1878 and was named in his honor .