

= Flem D. Sampson =

Flemon Davis "Flem" Sampson (January 23 , 1875 ? May 25 , 1967) was the 42nd Governor of Kentucky , serving from 1927 to 1931 . He graduated from Valparaiso University in 1894 , and opened a law practice in Barbourville , Kentucky . He formed a political alliance with future congressmen Caleb Powers and John Robsion , both prominent Republicans in the eastern part of the state . By 1916 , he was serving on the Kentucky Court of Appeals ? the state 's highest court ? having previously served as a county judge and circuit court judge . In 1923 , he was elevated to chief justice of the Court of Appeals . He served until 1927 , when he became the Republican gubernatorial nominee .

The Democrats nominated former governor and senator J. C. W. Beckham to challenge Sampson . The primary issue in the campaign was whether to outlaw parimutuel betting at the state 's racetracks . Beckham favored the ban , while Sampson opposed it . A political machine known as the Jockey Club backed Sampson , and several key Democrats bolted the party after Beckham 's nomination . Sampson won the governorship by over 32 @,@ 000 votes , but every other Republican on the ticket lost by small majorities . The results suggested that some carefully coordinated vote swapping had occurred to ensure Beckham 's defeat , but none was ever proven .

Sampson 's term in office was a tumultuous one . The 1928 legislature was dominated by Democrats and was not particularly responsive to Sampson 's proposals . After the session , Sampson was indicted for accepting gifts from textbook companies , but the charges were later dropped . In 1929 , Sampson removed Democratic political boss Ben Johnson from his post as highway commissioner . When legislators reconvened in 1930 , they retaliated by stripping Sampson of many of his appointment powers and reinstalling Johnson to his post . Later in the session , Sampson proposed to allow Samuel Insull to dam the Cumberland Falls to generate hydroelectric power . The General Assembly instead voted to accept an offer from T. Coleman du Pont to purchase the falls and turn them into a state park . The Assembly voted to further restrict Sampson 's powers in 1930 . The end of Sampson 's term was complicated by the economic realities of the Great Depression . He called out the Kentucky National Guard to quell a violent mine strike in Harlan County known as the Battle of Evarts . Following his term , Sampson returned to Barbourville and was re @-@ elected as a circuit court judge . He died May 25 , 1967 and was buried in Barbourville Cemetery .

= = Early life = =

Flem Sampson was born in a log cabin near London , Kentucky in Laurel County , the ninth of ten children born to Joseph and Emoline (Kellam) [a] Sampson . He was educated in the county 's public schools and the John T. Hays school . The family moved to Barbourville , Kentucky when Sampson was thirteen .

By age sixteen , Sampson was teaching at Indian Creek School in Laurel County . He attended Union College in Barbourville , then enrolled at Valparaiso University . He was class president for three years , and earned an A.B. in 1894 . Per university policy , he was also awarded and an LL.B. because , prior to graduation , he had studied for at least one year in a law office . He returned to Kentucky and was admitted to the bar in June 1895 .

Sampson established his legal practice in Barbourville , where he became the city attorney . Caleb Powers , who had been Sampson 's college roommate , now joined him as a partner in his law firm . Powers would later be accused of complicity to the assassination of Governor William Goebel . Because Powers was convicted by a partisan jury , he became a political martyr to many Republicans , and Sampson 's connection to him became a boon in heavily Republican eastern Kentucky .

Sampson later served as president of Barbourville 's First National Bank ; he was the youngest person ever to hold the position . He also served as president of the Barbourville Water @-@ works Company . On September 20 , 1897 , [b] he married Susie Steele ; the couple had three daughters ? Pauline , Emolyn , and Helen Katherine .

= = Political career = =

Sampson 's political career began in 1906 when he was elected county judge of Knox County , Kentucky , a position he held for four years . In 1911 , he was elected to the circuit court of the 34th Judicial District . He was re @-@ elected to this post in 1916 , but later that year , he was elected to the Kentucky Court of Appeals , then the court of last resort in Kentucky . He represented Kentucky 's Seventh Appellate District , and was elevated to chief justice on January 1 , 1923 . He was re @-@ elected to the court in 1924 .

= = = Governor of Kentucky = = =

Sampson and Congressman John M. Robsion organized a formidable Republican faction in the eastern part of Kentucky . In 1927 , Sampson was a candidate for the Republican gubernatorial nomination . His opponent was Robert H. Lucas , a tax collector for the Internal Revenue Service . Lucas secured the support of Kentucky senators Frederic M. Sackett and Richard P. Ernst , while Sampson was backed by longtime supporter John M. Robsion and the Jockey Club , a coalition of leaders who supported parimutuel betting on horse races . Sampson won the primary by a margin of 39 @, @ 375 .

The Democratic party was badly divided over the parimutuel betting issue as well as prohibition , and a severance tax on coal . The prohibitionist and anti @-@ gambling faction of the Democratic Party ? with the help of Louisville Courier @-@ Journal editor Robert Worth Bingham ? united to make former governor and senator J. C. W. Beckham the party 's gubernatorial nominee . Following Beckham 's nomination , many pro @-@ gambling and anti @-@ prohibition Democrats hurried to the support of Sampson . Sitting Democratic governor William J. Fields , who had been elected with help from the Jockey Club , was very passive in the campaign and refused to support Beckham .

The campaign was particularly contentious . Sampson contrasted his humble roots with Beckham 's aristocratic ones , declaring " I 'm just plain old Flem . When I 'm elected governor of Kentucky , come into my office and sit down and say ' Howdy Flem ' . " He also trumpeted his own moral purity , claiming he " never smoked , chewed , drank , gambled ? not even bet on an election . " He promised , however , to protect horse racing in the Commonwealth . In response , Sampson 's opponents dubbed him " Flem @-@ Flam Flem " .

Sampson won the election by a majority of over 32 @, @ 000 votes , although every other Republican candidate lost by small margins . In the lieutenant governor 's race , Democrat James Breathitt , Jr. defeated Sampson 's running mate , E. E. Nelson , by 159 votes out of more than 700 @, @ 000 cast . It was estimated that the Jockey Club spent half a million dollars to defeat Beckham and the large majority for Sampson versus the close defeat of all other Republican candidates suggested some type of fraud , although none was ever proven .

During the 1928 legislative session , it became clear that the bipartisan support shown for Sampson had been one of political convenience rather than true conviction . Among the minor accomplishments of the session were the creation of the Kentucky Progress Commission (the forerunner of the State Department of Commerce) and the adoption of " My Old Kentucky Home " as the state song . The Democratic General Assembly sanctioned Sampson 's plan for free textbooks , but did not fund it . Proposals to ban parimutuel betting and the teaching of evolution in the state 's schools were both defeated . Kentucky historian James C. Klotter called the 1928 legislative session " almost a ' do @-@ nothing ' session " . Following the session , a grand jury indicted Sampson for accepting gifts from the textbook companies , but the indictment was eventually dismissed .

The first major controversy of Sampson 's administration was over the selection of the state 's highway commissioner . The Highway Department employed over ten thousand people and spent nearly 45 % of the state 's budget . Legislators ' votes could often be bought with promises of new road construction in their districts . Thus , the department became a primary vehicle for dispensing patronage to political supporters . Sampson 's predecessor , Governor Fields , had chosen retired

congressman and Democratic political boss Ben Johnson to head the department , and Sampson had agreed to retain him in exchange for his support against Beckham . However , Sampson felt that such a powerful position could not be left in the hands of a Democrat , and he removed Johnson from office in December 1929 .

Democrats in the General Assembly were outraged . When the 1930 legislative session convened , they immediately passed a bill that stripped Sampson of his power to appoint a highway commissioner , giving it to a three @-@ person commission composed of the governor , lieutenant governor , and attorney general . The Republican Sampson would be outnumbered and outvoted in this group . Confident that the Democrats would not lose another gubernatorial election , Democratic legislators stipulated in the bill that the appointment power would return to the governor in 1931 , the end of Sampson 's term . The law passed the House by a vote of 53 ? 42 and the Senate by a vote of 22 ? 15 . Sampson vetoed the bill , but the veto was overridden , and Johnson was returned to his former position .

Sampson also made enemies when he backed Samuel Insull 's plan to dam the Cumberland Falls to generate hydroelectric power . An ally of the traditional southern power groups ? the utility companies and textbook manufacturers ? Sampson cited the jobs to be gained from the plan . The plan was opposed conservationists in the state and by most of the state 's newspapers . An alternate plan was proposed by Louisville @-@ born millionaire and Delaware senator T. Coleman du Pont , who offered to purchase the falls for \$ 230 @,@ 000 and turn it into a state park . The General Assembly passed legislation giving the state park commission the right of eminent domain over the falls , then voted to accept the du Pont 's offer . Sampson vetoed the Assembly 's action , but his veto was overridden .

Sampson 's agenda for the 1930 session was lost in the fights over Ben Johnson and Cumberland Falls . His calls for funding the free textbook program , compulsory sterilization of the mentally ill , and restrictions on chain stores were ignored . Instead , the legislature continued eroding his gubernatorial powers , including the power to appoint members of the textbook commission . With nearly all of the governor 's powers stripped away and given to a three @-@ person commission , Lieutenant Governor James Breathitt , Jr. became the de facto governor for the remainder of Sampson 's term . The General Assembly pursued its own agenda , passing a mandatory driver 's license law , a revised election law , and a sales tax on retail stores . They also allocated funding for the purchase of what would become Mammoth Cave National Park . Sampson vetoed 12 bills during the 1930 session , but the legislature overrode 11 of them .

With the onset of the Great Depression , Sampson worked to control government costs , but endorsed highway progression . A severe drought in 1930 left 86 of Kentucky 's counties applying for federal aid . As unemployment in the eastern coal fields climbed to 40 percent , the United Mine Workers made their first inroads in the region . In 1931 , mine owners began firing workers who joined the union . Many of these workers gathered in Evarts , Kentucky . The local sheriff added 26 deputies to his staff , helping enforce the blacklisting of these miners and discourage further organization . Union leaders petitioned Sampson to remove the sheriff and the county judge from office . Violent squabbles between striking union miners and local authorities began as early as mid @-@ April 1931 . On May 5 , 1931 , three guards and a miner were killed in a shootout that became known as the Battle of Evarts . Two days later , Sampson called in the National Guard to disarm both the mine guards and the union miners . All of the union 's leaders were arrested , and the strike ultimately failed .

= = = Later political career = = =

Following his term as governor , Sampson returned to his legal practice in Barbourville , and was elected as a circuit court judge . In 1940 , he once again sought election to the Kentucky Court of Appeals , but was defeated in the Republican primary by Eugene Siler . In 1957 , he was appointed to the Citizens ' Advisory Highway Committee , and was awarded the Governor 's Medallion for distinguished public service in 1959 .

At the age of ninety @-@ one , Sampson served on the State Constitutional Revision Committee .

He died in Pewee Valley , Kentucky on May 25 , 1967 , and was buried at the Barbourville Cemetery .